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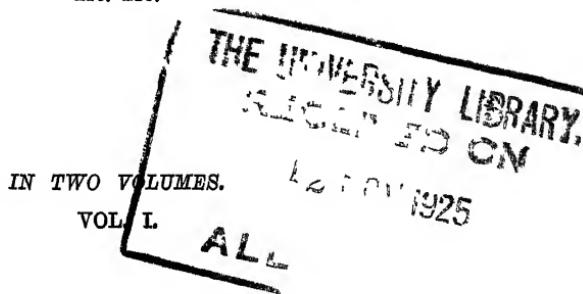
# A NEW HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH STAGE

*FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE LIBERTY OF  
THE THEATRES,  
IN CONNECTION WITH THE PATENT HOUSES,*

*From Original Papers in the Lord Chamberlain's Office, the State Paper Office, and other sources*

By PERCY FITZGERALD, M.A., F.S.A.,

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ETC. ETC.



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To Henry Irving, Esq.

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MY DEAR IRVING,

*Readers of the following pages will feel  
that there is something appropriate in associating  
the most conspicuous performer of the day with  
“A New History of the Stage.” Apart from this  
view, I gratify my own feelings of regard by joining  
your name with my labours*

*Believe me,*

*Yours always sincerely,*

PERCY FITZGERALD.



## PREFACE.

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THIS "New History of the English Stage" will, I think, be found fairly warranted in claiming *novelty*, *being new both in its plan, treatment, and materials*. *Preceding accounts*, such as those of Dibdin and Dr. Doran, are chiefly concerned with accounts of the dramatists, plays, and actors, in which the public has been of late years *thoroughly instructed*. Such matter is highly entertaining, but to understand the stage and its growth, as a social element, it becomes necessary to consider its titles, pedigrees, patents, licences, and other official documents, which, as in the case of the history of a town or castle, will best show its rise and the various changes it has undergone. Only in this way can we follow its many relations to the Court and magistrates, as well as to the society of the day, which supported or opposed it. Such a plan, I am certain, will be found acceptable as being the most *scientific* and certain, besides having analogy with the schemes of histories of other subjects. *In this view the following account has been written, in which almost every document of importance relating to the stage will be found set out.* The most interesting are those from the Lord Chamberlain's Office, supplying, by a series of Orders, a view of the control

exercised by that high official on behalf of the Court. This I owe to the courtesy of the Hon S Ponsonby Fane, secured by the kind offices of my friend, Mr E. Pigott, the present Licenser of Plays. To many other persons I owe many curious papers; other documents I myself have discovered or made available. *I may say, indeed, that nearly all the papers given in this work will be found new to the general reader.* Another feature in the work is the account of theatrical manners and customs in life behind the scenes during successive generations, and in each period I have also, in the case of the performers whose career may be otherwise familiar to us, taken care to supply such new facts of interest as have come under my notice. Further, I have adopted the principle of giving contemporary reports, descriptions of actors and acting, in the words of the observer himself, thus supplying the impression made at the time. In a work of so much labour, and involving so many details, I must ask indulgence for any mistake or oversight.

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*Period the First.*

FROM THE RESTORATION TO THE UNION OF THE  
THEATRES, 1660-1682



# A NEW HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH STAGE.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE COCKPIT

Nor very far from the bottom of Drury Lane, and almost fronting the narrow passage that is called Duke's Court, is to be found a narrow entry that leads into a long squalid alley. This bears the name of Pitt Place, and takes the theatrical explorer—for such only would it tempt—into Great Wild Street. Not many years ago the place was known as Cockpit Lane, or Alley, and here it is supposed that the original Drury Lane Theatre was standing some two hundred years ago. This edifice would seem to claim that title with more propriety than the present house, or its predecessors which stood in Brydges Street and Russell Street, though they could be seen from Drury Lane, but the old “Cockpitt,” or Phoenix Theatre, which would have stood nearly opposite the present graveyard and “mortuary house,” was what lent the place some hundred years of dramatic prestige. The whole quarter, as it is, now feels the influence of the great establishment, to

which all the neighbouring streets, courts, and alleys—swarming with tenants more or less squalid, men, women, children—turn their eyes hopefully, as though it were some huge cathedral in a pious district, their dependence on it being strong at Christmas and such seasons, when cohorts of human figures are required to furnish a goodly show upon the stage, and when fingers and eyes are kept busy over clothes and “properties” of all kinds. And just as this modern influence is manifest, so are there also to be found traces of the old Cockpit era in the shape of a Phoenix Alley, leading from Hail Street into Long Acre, the Duke’s Court before mentioned.

The squalid Drury Lane of our day would hardly help us to an image of the district some three centuries ago, when on the right of the present Olympic Theatre stood Drury House, the town mansion of an important family of that name \* The house, later rebuilt and called Craven House, was a stately pile, with a display of twelve windows in its length, where its owner, Lord Craven, gave shelter and entertainment to the Queen of Bohemia. A cockpit—as cock-fighting, bear-baiting, and other savage amusements were then fashionable—was to be found higher up in the alley just described, opposite a tavern called The Castle, and about the year 1612 or 1613 a theatre was erected, or rather the old cockpit was converted to this new purpose.† To this hour may be seen Nell Gwynne’s house, at No. 89. Such a conversion would not be attended with much trouble or expense, as the arrangements of a theatre in these days were of the most simple and primitive kind. In

\* It is curious to note the changes in the place even since Leigh Hunt’s day, who described it as standing “on the ground now included in Craven Buildings and the Olympic Pavilion.”

† In the “Continuation to Stowe’s Chronicle” it is described under the date of March, 1616-17, as “lately built.” Camden, under the same date, alludes to it as *nuper erectum*.

London there were about half-a-dozen theatres playing when the Cockpit was opened, most of whose names—such as the Black Bull, the Fortune—support the theory of the Old Inn Yard, with the galleries running round, serving as the original playhouse. The Salisbury Street, “Blackfriars,” and Cockpit houses were about the same size, and were what was known as “private houses.” Drury Lane was hardly a respectable neighbourhood, owing, it would seem, to the presence of the cockpit, and an old writer declares bluntly that theatres might be more harshly designated, without injustice or offence, that if not actually disorderly houses, they were at least “cousins german” to such, or surrounded by them “*witness the Cockpitt.*”\* This evil reputation has indeed attached itself to English playhouses often, after a sort of intermittent fashion. For a century later, when the Licensing Act was passed, Sir John Hawkins, in a similar strain, spoke of theatres as being encompassed by “a halo of bagnios.” The same complaint might have been renewed in the saloon days of Drury Lane, and occasionally in our own time.

This evil reputation of the Cockpit House attracted the attention of the London ’prentices on a certain Shrove Tuesday, March 4th, 1616-17, a period when they claimed a privilege of venting their fury on houses of a disorderly kind. The attack was led by two young fellows—Tom Brent and Johnny Cary—who rushed down Drury Lane at the head of a small party, and there, says a stirring ballad

Each dore, with hundreds more,  
And windows burst asunder,  
And to the tire-house broke they in,  
Which some began to plunder.

\* Prynne, “Histrio-mastix”

Their excesses were directed by the leader, who incited them not to spare the wardrobe

Teare and rende, I'll stand your friend,  
And will upholde your fury.

All the books were destroyed, the properties broken, and the clothes torn up Mr. Collier says that the theatre itself was pulled down, thus translating Camden's description. "Mar. 4. *Theatrum ludionum nuper in Drury Lane a furente multitudine diruitur, et apparatus dilaceratur*" "Wrecked" would be more the true meaning of *diruitur*. It was, moreover, described in the Privy Council letter as "an attempt" to destroy the place. The authorities were very indignant at "this foul and insolent disorder," and required the Lord Mayor to take prompt measures to bring the vagrant rogues to justice The vagrant rogues were not to be intimidated, and as the anniversary came round scattered handbills in the playhouses, appointing their friends to assemble at the Fortune and go on from thence to the Red Bull and Cockpit, and raze these buildings to the ground The train-bands were, however, called out, and mischief prevented.\*

In these early days of the Cockpit there were several companies of players, duly registered, as it were—"the King's servants," "the Prince's," and the "Princess Elizabeth's," or "Queen's servants," as they were called later—which

\* Collier's "Annals of the Stage." In the dialogue given by the author of "Historia Histrionica," one says "The Blackfriars, Cockpit, and Salisbury Court were called private houses, and were very small to what we see now The Cockpit was standing since the Restoration, and Rhodes' company acted there for some time *Lovewit—I have seen that*" The other, Truman, answers "Then you have seen the other two in effect, for they were all three built almost exactly alike for form and bigness Here they had pits for the gentry and acted by candlelight The Globe, Fortune, and Bull were large houses, and lay partly open to the weather, and they alwaies acted by daylight"

performed at the Cockpit. From the peculiar position of all actors during this and later times, they became thus dependent on the King, or on some royal personage of quality, duke or baron, wearing his badge, as it were, and enjoying his protection. It has often appeared a little perplexing why this exceptional degradation should have attached to the profession of the players, and how it should have been subjected to what might appear an unconstitutional oppression. The truth was, it would have been entirely owing to the reckless and licentious behaviour of the players themselves, who joined to the disorderly conduct of other exhibitors the special and tempting advantage of a freedom of tongue. It is not so difficult to trace the growth of this restraint as well as that of the Chamberlain's jurisdiction. The tribe of mummers, tumblers, bear exhibitors, clowns, jokers, and entertainers of all kinds had grown into a nuisance, that was troublesome to the peace of localities and to such police as there was. There was also a vast number of "drolls" and mimics, whose freedom, quickened by rivalry, and knowing no restraint, may be conceived from characters of the same kind that are met at races, fairs, and sometimes in the London streets. Now the line that divided this class from the players who performed at such rude houses as the Cockpit was but a fine one, and indeed it will be seen from the Act of Parliament that the more regular players were usually excepted from the class of vagrants solely on the ground of some person of influence guaranteeing that their conduct should be orderly. This Act, the 39 Eliz. c. 4, was made "for the suppression of rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars, that all persons, proctors, procurers, or collectors for gaols, prisons, etc., or fencers, bearwards, common players of interludes, and minstrels wandering abroad (other than players of interludes belonging to any

baron of this realm, or any other honourable personages of grande degree to be authorised to play under the hand and seal of arms of such baron or personage), all jugglers, tinkers, pedlers, and petty chapmen wandering abroad, all wandering persons, able in body, using loitering and refusing to work, etc. These shall be adjudged and deemed rogues and vagabonds and sturdy beggars, and punished as such." Even the exception was removed by the 1 James I. c. 7, s. 1, so that if these favoured professionals were found "wandering abroad," they became affected by the penalty. The principle of this interference appears to be founded on the regulation of crowds assumed to be easily excited to disorders, and the same principle obtains now in the somewhat arbitrary regulation of public-houses, dancing and music rooms of a low type. It would seem too that the supervision of the Chamberlain grew out of this guarantee or warranty for their proper behaviour, as the royal personage or nobleman, by withdrawing his protection, would leave the players to the mercy of the law. Such protection was clearly a privilege of the King's or of members of his family, and the title of "His Majesty's servants" had a really practical bearing and advantage.

This licence, however, to a great degree reflected the licence of the Court and higher classes, which even the fact of their enjoying a privilege would have stimulated. In fact, if we were to watch the course of the player for the space of the hundred years that followed, we should see a panorama of quarrellings, scufflings, personalities, libels, and dissolute behaviour, which seems to prove that no body of people so much required restraint. Disorders in ordinary persons may be visited with the ordinary penalties; but actors have the advantage of a vast publicity, and their excesses are infinitely more dangerous. It may be added, too, in justification of such supervision, that theatrical entertainments, in their abuse or decay, are not to be

distinguished from common “shows” Further, when they are made to minister to corrupt tastes, such public instructors in viciousness will frustrate all the efforts of society in the direction of schools, religious teaching, and even police.

Under Charles the Second, the Master of the Revels looked after the comedians, and exacted his fees sternly Mr Malone quotes the diary of Sir Henry Herbert, who filled this office, which shows clearly that the players being “His Majesty’s servants” was no Court fiction. It is evident from this record that they sought to secure their popularity by attempting personal satire or mimicry Thus in November, 1682, he writes “In the play of ‘The Ball,’ written by Shirley, and acted by the Queen’s players, there were divers personated so naturally both of lords and others of the Court, that I took it ill and would have forbidden the play, but that Biston promised many things which I found fault with should be left out . The first that offends in this kind, if poets or players, shall be sure of public punishment” On another occasion, Inigo Jones came to complain of a piece called “A Tale of a Tub,” in which he was introduced as one Vitruvius Hoop; “a personal injury,” he thought it. The licenser accordingly struck out the offensive passages, while a play of Massinger’s was forbidden as containing “dangerous matter” as to Spain, with which country England had made peace “I had my fee notwithstanding, which belongs to me for reading it over, and ought to be brought always with the book” On another occasion his superior—like a successor of his two hundred years later, George Colman—took on himself the duty of censor, and went over all that the Master of the Revels had crossed out, considering the “faiths,” “sdeaths,” to be asseverations and not oaths “To which I do submit, as my master’s judgment, but under favour consider them to be oaths” This officer seems to have enjoyed absolute power, forbidding a play of

Shakespeare's at one house, "in courtesie done" to Hemming of the Blackfriars Theatre, and for which this not very scrupulous officer accepted a fee, or rather douceur, of 5*l*. He could also allot the actors to different houses as he pleased. "I disposed," he says, "of Perkins and some others to the theatre in Salisbury Court, and joined them to the best of that company."

The manager of the Cockpit was one Christopher Beeston, and during the last few years of King Charles's reign the company comprised the following actors. W. Sherlock, J. Sumner, G. Stulfield, W. Allen, H. Clerke, R. Axen, A. Turner, M. Bowyer, S. Page, E. Fenn, T. Bird, R. Perkins. They performed pieces of Massinger, Forde, Heywood, and others. The receipts, too, must have been respectable, if they were on the scale of the Globe, where for nine performances of a single play 1500*l* was taken at the doors.

Though the Cockpit might be considered the precursor of Drury Lane Theatre, yet the Cockpit companies were not yet the forerunners of the Drury Lane company. This was the band known as the King's Players, which had been originally the Lord Chamberlain's, and which by the patent of 1603 were transferred to the royal service, and by the later patent of 1619-20 were indulged with the privilege of playing at both sides of the water, either in their own Globe, at Bankside, or at the Blackfriars house. They were treated with unusual favour. In this document they were not his "servants," but his "well-beloved servants," and indeed this mark of favour was presumed to be a declaration of patronage in answer to some new oppression on the part of the City. Such was the origin of "His Majesty's servants." "Nay," exclaims Dugdale, in a burst of loyalty, "see the bounty of our all-kind Sovereign, . . . as taking to him the late Lord Chamberlain's servants, now the King's actors; the Queen taking to her the Earl of

Worcester's servants, that are now her actors , and the Prince, their son, Henry Prince of Wales, took to him the Earl of Nottingham his servants, who are now his actors ; so that of lords' servants they are now the servants of the King, Queen, and Prince ”\* The constitution of these societies was conceived in a truer dramatic spirit than the associations of our day. Then the “company” were the important element, and the place where they performed a minor consideration Now it is the theatre that is the chief element, and the actors are subsidiary.

The annals of the Cockpit are meagre enough , the only exciting event being the arrival of a company of French players in the year 1635, which received the warm patronage of the Queen. The King interested himself for them, and told Sir H Herbert that they might play on the two “off” nights, or sermon days in Lent, “at the house in Drury Lane where the Queen's players usually play,” and when the house was usually shut The manager, Beeston, obeyed cheerfully, and the Frenchmen reaped a golden harvest, besides “*many rich clothes given to them,*” a custom that obtained almost to the present century The following year London was visited by the plague, when all the theatres were closed under an order, which, however, the Queen's players ventured to disregard. A warrant was issued to fetch before the Council the offending manager with one “Michael Moon,” later the well-known Major Mohun, and others of the company, and “a clause” was issued to “command the keeper of the play-house called the Cockpit in Drury Lane, who either live in it or have relation to it, not to permit plays to be acted there till further notice,” an injunction maintained nearly a whole year Christopher Beeston was succeeded by William Beeston, who presided over a juvenile company known as

\* Collier's “Annals,” vol 1 p 350

"Beeston's Boys," and he again was followed by the well-known Sir Wilham Davenant, the famous patentee. "I do authorise and appoint," ran the terms of the warrant, "in the playhouse or theatre commonly called the Cockpit in Drury Lane, William Davenant, gentleman, one of His Majesty's servants, for me and in my name, to take into his government and care the said company of players, to govern, order, and dispose of them for acting, etc., and I do hereby enjoin and command them to obey the said William Davenant, *as they shall answer to the contrary*" This shows the despotic control exercised, as well as the haughty air of prerogative that was assumed even on the eve of its dissolution. In the spirited little dialogue before quoted, published in the year 1699,\* and written with a quaint simplicity and genuineness that is very pleasing, Mr. Lovewit and Mr Truman talk over the old days of the drama before the Revolution, which Lovewit recollects. "Pray, sir," asks his friend, "what master parts can you remember?" At the Cockpit were Perkins, Bowyer, W Allen, Bird, Robins, a comedian, all of whom were eminent actors. The Fortune and Red Bull were frequented by citizens and the meaner sort, but at the Blackfriars was to be found an audience composed of men of grave and sober behaviour. The Cockpit was one of the smaller houses, like the Blackfriars and Salisbury Street playhouses. Here were "pits for the gentry," and the performances took place by candlelight, whereas the Bull and Fortune Theatres were partly "open to the weather," in the nature of summer theatres. "All the players," says Mr Lovewit, "got money and lived in reputation." And he was acute enough to note the reason of this prosperity, which applies to every era of the stage. It was simply that purely

\* Wright's "Historia Histiorum," a rare little tract, well known to bibliophilists

dramatic elements were made the aim and end. "They could draw," he said, "without scenes or machines" The prices were low,\* the plays moral, and the houses well regulated The consequence was that nearly a dozen playhouses were in full work. Then came the Rebellion and the wars, the closing of the playhouses, and the drama was well-nigh extinguished

The Commonwealth, as is well known, treated the stage with unspaying severity. "Most of the players," says Mr. Lovewit, "went into the King's army, and, like good men and true, served their old master, though in a different yet more honourable capacity Robinson," the quaint and simple narrative goes on, "was killed at the taking of a place (I think Basing House) by Harrison, he that was after hanged at Charing Cross, who refused him quarter and shot him in the head when he had laid down his arms, abusing Scripture at the same time as saying 'Cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently' Mohun was a captain, and after the wars were ended here served in Flanders, where he received pay as a major. Hart was a lieutenant of horse in Prince Rupert's regiment. Burt was a cornet in the same troop, and Shatterel quartermaster Allen of the Cockpit was a major and quartermaster-general at Oxford I have not heard of one of these players of any note that sided with the other party, but only Swanston, and he professed himself a Presbyterian The rest either lost or exposed their lives for their King When the wars were over and the Royalists totally subdued, most of them who were alive gathered to London, and for a subsistence endeavoured to revive this old trade privately They made up a company out of all the scattered members of several, and

\* In the journal of Sir H Mildmay's daily expenses, quoted by Mr Colher ("Annals of the Stage"), are these entries "1638, June 6, to a pretty merry comedy at the Cock, 1s 20 March, to a base play at the Cockpit, 1s. 6d."

in the winter before the King's murder, 1648, they ventured to act some plays with as much caution and privacy as could be, at the Cockpit. They continued undisturbed for three or four days, but at last, as they were presenting the tragedy of 'The Bloody Brothers' (in which Louis acted Aubrey, Tayler as Rollo, Pollard the Cook, Burt, Laterell, and I think Hart, Otho), a party of foot soldiers beset the house, surprised 'em away in their habits, not admitting 'em to shift, to Hatton House, then a prison, where, having detained them some time, they plundered them of their cloaths, and let 'em loose again. Afterwards, in Oliver's time, they used to act privately three or four miles or more out of town, now here, now there, sometimes in noblemen's houses, in particular Holland House at Kensington, where the nobility and gentry who met, but in no great numbers, used to make a sum for them, each giving a broad piece or the like. And Alexander Goffe, the woman-actor at Blackfriars (who had made himself known to persons of quality), used to be the jackal and give notice of time and place. At Christmas and Bartlemy Fairs they bribed the officer at Whitehall and were allowed to act a few days at the Red Bull. Lowin, in his latter days, kept an inn (The Three Pidgeons) at Brentford, where he died very old, and his poverty was as great as his age. Pollard, who lived single and had a competent estate, retired to some relations he had in the country and there ended his life. Perkins and Sumner of the Cockpit kept house together at Clerkenwell, and were there buried. These all died before the Restoration."

Discouraging as were these conditions, the witty Davenant contrived to open the Cockpit in 1658 with a new kind of entertainment, and though Oliver Cromwell was alive the performance was tolerated. It was an opera, "The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru," "expressed by vocal and instrumental music and the art of perspective in scenes." This rather

exceptional favour on the part of the grim Protector might puzzle lookers-on, but if we are to accept the statement of the plaintiff in an action brought against him, this was an artful piece of flattery of Davenant's, who, by blackening the Spaniards, "made Oliver the Tyrant's cruelties appear mercies" He is also charged with acting as Oliver's Master of the Revels, and with writing complimentary verses to his daughter \* There was a better reason in the attractiveness of the entertainment and the welcome graces of operatic harmony, then new to the public The introduction of the perspective in scenes, of which Sir William may be considered the "father," might on the other hand seem a meretricious element, intolerable to the Puritan mind. Richard Cromwell was not so indulgent, and directed that these persons should be required to state under what authority they were playing, that a report should be furnished to him on the subject. But it is evident that the players shared in the indulgence which heralded the coming back of the King

\* See his petitions to the King in Malone's "Shakespeare," vol ix.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST PATENT OF 1660

WHEN the “Merry Monarch” was returning to England after his weary wanderings, there was noticed on the deck of the royal vessel a lively gentleman—one who walked up and down with the nobles of the Court, and kept the company in fits of laughter with his humorous stories. This “merry droll,” as he appeared to one of the officials from London, was Mr Thomas Killigrew, a gentleman who had attended his master through his exile, and by his buoyant spirits had lightened many a weary hour.\* He had indeed enjoyed extraordinary favours from the time when he was a mere boy about the Court, having been a page of honour to King Charles the First and groom of the bedchamber to the present Prince† Much ridicule was attached to a sort of embassy on which he was despatched in the year 1649, his master having sent him from Paris as his “Resident” at Venice, with instructions to press on the Courts of Florence and

\* As the traveller stands in the market-place at Bruges and looks up at the belfry-tower, he will see to his right a small corner-house, where the Prince and his courtiers lodged and tried to find entertainment in that dullest of towns.

† These will be found set out in the Calendar of the State Papers, *passim*, and would make a long list.

Savoy the necessity of assisting him with arms and money, and of not recognising the usurping English Government\* "The King," says Lord Clarendon, "was much dissuaded from sending him to Venice, but afterwards His Majesty was prevailed upon, only to gratify him (Killigrew), that in his capacity he might borrow money of English merchants for his own subsistence, which he did, and nothing to the honour of his master; and was at last compelled to leave the Republic for his vicious behaviour, of which the Venetian ambassador complained to the King when he came afterwards to Paris"†

Like most pleasant *viveus* and good boon companions, he had that carelessness in his dealings with cash which in other men of more correct habits goes by a less indulgent name

Indeed, the whole Killigrew family were all clever, if not all wits. The youngest, Dr Henry Killigrew, was a clergyman. He wrote a couple of dramas, one when very young. Laug-baine says that on its first representation at Blackfriars, certain critics objected "that it was *monstrous* and *impossible* for a person of only seventeen years old, as the character of Clearchus is supposed to be, to conceive and utter such

\* Killigrew's instructions, written in Latin at great length, with his letters to the various Courts and their replies, are in the British Museum

† He set out in 1651. This scandalous finale was satirised in some verses of the time

Our Resident, Tom,  
From Venice is come,  
And hath left the Statesman behind him,  
Talks in the same pitch,  
Is as wise, is as rich,  
And just where you left him you find him

But who says he was not  
A man of much plot  
May repent the false accusation,  
Harry plotted and penn'd  
Six plays, to attend  
The farce of his negotiation.

sentiments as he is made to speak To which Lord Falkland made this very judicious reply, *that it was neither monstrous nor impossible for one of seventeen years to speak at such a rate, when he that made him speak in that manner, and wrote the whole play, was himself no older*" His daughter was Miss Anne Killigrew, celebrated by Dryden for her gifts in poetry and painting The eldest brother, Sir William Killigrew, Knight, fought in the wars, and was the author of some half-a-dozen pieces

Abroad, Tom had married one of the maids of honour, Mrs Cecilia Crofts—a marriage "in which His Majesty was pleased to concern himself, as appears by his letters," which were in possession of M. Bridgynoires "Having then no estate nor any expectation but from the King's bounty," her portion of 10,000*l* was a very welcome assistance. "I am told," said Mr. Pepys, in 1668, "that Tom Killigrew hath a fee out of the wardrobe for cap and bells, under the title of the King's fool and jester, and may revile or jeer anybody, the greatest person, without offence, by the privilege of his place" Sprat, in a letter to Wien, quotes him as the type of all that was amusing and agreeable. But so ardent a place-hunter, one so thirsty for places, pensions, patents, and "seizings" of all kinds that might turn up, it is impossible to conceive He seems to have sought all these good things on system, as it were, and something after the principle of that later Provost of Dublin College who, when supposed to be fairly satisfied with the whole kingdom, would have asked for the Isle of Man as a cabbage-garden. His plan was to ask for everything, though indeed it must be said that the future patentee of Drury Lane Theatre was not very much wiser in this respect than his neighbours Even when he was a page at Charles the First's Court, he contrived to secure a

pension of 100*l* a year, on which, after the Restoration, he claimed accumulated arrears \*

He appears even to have compounded for a licence to set up a lottery for three years † This pleasant sinecurist was therefore eminently suited to be the parent of a monopoly that long weighed heavily on the profession The secret of this series of encroachments was his complete ascendancy over the easy King, who, indeed, could not refuse him anything. Tom Killigrew could speak to him according to his humour and in the freest fashion, once going so far as to tell him that “he was off to Hell to fetch Oliver Cromwell to take care of England, as his successor took none at all!” Such sallies were tolerated good-humouredly When he set foot in his native land, after twenty years’ exile, he was an elderly gentleman past fifty, with a burly figure, a large good-humoured face, a merry eye, a tuft and moustache, and an open collar, disclosing a double chin His portrait indeed suggests one of Van der Helst’s burly Dutchmen ‡ Such was the person who

\* These and other significant notices will be found in the Calendar of State Papers, *passim*

† For anything that “turned up” he put in a claim He begged to be made “Keeper of the Greenwich Armoury” in consideration of his expenses attending the King abroad There was “a parcel of white plate,” worth 1200*l*, that had belonged to Oliver Cromwell—he begged for it There were the coppices in Northampton, which he begged for, and which were accordingly felled and sold, and the money handed over to him Then he obtained a share in “the licensing of pedlers and petty chapmen,” as well as a share in a licence for thirty one years ‘ for appointing places for shooting with the long bow ’ When the lands of Sir T Hyde were escheated, the rapacious Killigrew obtained a writ of estate He had given a bond for 500*l* in the nature of a security, and obtained a release from it He begged that in a certain suit he might not be affected by some defect of form He even made a request that he might have the goods and chattels of a convict He obtained the reversion of a water bailiffship, and two years later begged that his reversion might be given to his two sons Then he obtained a warrant “to search for and seize” certain prize goods, supposed to be concealed in London, then prayed for a monopoly in houses intended for the entertainment of distressed mariners and passengers Was a sheriff fined, he promptly obtained an order that the fine should be paid to him All this time he was enjoying a pension of 500*l* a year

‡ There is introduced beside him his favourite dog, on whose collar are his

was to be the first patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, the precursor of a numerous line of directors, many of whom reflected his jovial and *débonnaire* manners. What led him to embrace such a calling was partly a theatrical taste, for he had written some half-a-dozen plays, partly an eagerness to make money, this patent being but one out of the many that he enjoyed; and perhaps in great measure the pleasant opportunities for amusement which the direction of a theatre offered.

Historians are not agreed as to which was the first theatre at which plays were given, for one of the speakers in the "Historia" tells us "Presently, after the Restoration, the King's players acted publicly at the Red Bull for some time, and then removed to a new-built playhouse in Vere Street by Clare Market. There they continued for a year or two, and then removed to the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, where they first made use of scenes, which had been a little before introduced upon the public stage by Sir William Davenant, at the Duke's Old Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields, but afterwards very much improved with the addition of curious machines by Mr. Betterton, at the New Theatre in Dorset Garden, to the great expense and continued charge of the players. This much impaired their profit over what it was before, and I have been informed (by one of 'em) that for several years next after the Restoration every whole sharer in Mr. Hart's company got 1000*l* per annum."

Thus amid the rejoicings on the King's arrival, theatrical entertainment was not forgotten. The Cockpit was conducted by the *ci-devant* bookseller, Rhodes, with such spirit and address as to have become quite the fashion. The attraction was chiefly owing to his two clever apprentices, Betterton (or Batterton) and Kynaston, the latter, according

arms and initials, a friendly companionship, which shows certain evidence of a good heart, a friendship for "the friend of man."

to the mimetic practice of the time, playing women's characters with extraordinary success. As we have seen, he had "fitted up" the theatre in Monk's time, and brought together a very complete and respectable company—Betterton, Sheppy, Lovel, Lilliston, Undehill, Turner, Dixon, and R. Noakes, while for the women parts—Kynaston, J. Noakes, Angel, W. Betterton,\* Mosely, and Floid. They played "Rule a Wife," "The Bondman," "The Maid of the Mill," and "The Unfortunate Lovers," the young Kynaston in the last two pieces producing a *furor*. "He being then very young made a complete female stage beauty, performing his parts so well, especially Arthiope and Aglaura, being parts greatly moving compassion and pity, this has since been disputable among the judicious whether any woman that succeeded him so sensibly touched the audiences as he." The ardent Pepys, who was in the audience on the night of August 18th, 1660, thought him "the loveliest lady he ever saw in his life." He was also there in October, when he saw him in "Othello," acting the Moor to his satisfaction. "By the same token," Mr. Pepys adds, "a very pretty lady that sat by me called out to see Desdemona smothered." The plays were all of this sound stamp, and by such classical writers as Beaumont and Fletcher and Shakespeare.

His Majesty being now seated on the throne, and the playhouses reopened, it might be interesting to learn what was the earliest piece performed, this we have no means of knowing. On November 19th, 1660, a play was acted at the Cockpit, which was probably the first time of the King's attendance. The prologue is printed as a broadside in the Luttrell Collection. We find Pepys visiting the playhouse "On January 3rd, 1661, to the theatre, where was acted

\* This name reappears within living memory, the well known Mrs. Glover having been a Miss Betterton, changed from Batterton.

'Begga's Bush,' it being very well done, and here the *first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage*" But February 21st brought the issue of a curious advertisement, which must have troubled old Ralph Alleyn in his grave—"The Fortune playhouse, situate between Whitecross Street and Golding Lane, with the ground thereto belonging, is to be let to be built upon, where twenty-thrice tenements may be erected with off-gardens, and a street may be cut through for the better accommodation of the buildings" But it will be seen that this notice refers more to the "desirable building-ground" than to the theatre itself It remained standing, a quaint old building, to within living memory.

Meanwhile the facetious Tom Killigrew, who had his half-dozen plays in his desk, having determined to make this dramatic experiment, the same idea also occurred to Sir William Davenant It might seem strange in our day, were two gentlemen about the Court to take up the management of a theatre, and thus compete with persons of the class of a bookseller's 'prentice, but it must be borne in mind that the theatre had quite different relations to society to what it has now, and that it rather suggested the possibility of a number of noblemen and gentlemen now taking on themselves the direction of a race meeting, and controlling jockeys and employés and betting men. The direction of the stage was then a pastime, not the purely money-making speculation into which it has since degenerated It was the amusement of the Court and nobles, the theatres as yet having no formal character, and the performance taking place in a palace, country house, and tavern yard. Davenant, being now a manager of some experience and success, was to engage in the same pursuit.

The two courtiers resolved to turn their position and influence to the greatest profit, and conceived a daring and

original scheme. As patents were then in vogue, and furnished an excellent and inexpensive mode of rewarding adherents, it seemed an excellent idea to procure a complete monopoly of the theatrical performances, and the King had hardly been two months in the country before the existing managers learned that they must shut up their theatres, as no one was to be allowed to present plays but the favoured gentlemen of the Court! This privilege was in the form of a grant, and dated August 21st, 1660 \*

This, it will be seen, was merely a privilege to erect a company of actors, and build or hire a theatre, and not the patent under which old Drury Lane was constituted, and which was granted later. This document, however, granted

\* From the Calendar of State Papers we find that on July 9th a warrant was issued for the grant to Killigrew to erect a company of players who shall be the King's company, and to build a theatre "No companies of actors" were to be allowed, saving this one and the one granted by the late King to Sir W Davenant On July 19th another warrant for a licence to Killigrew and Davenant was signed, "to erect two playhouses in places approved of by the surveyor, and supressing all the others" The PATENT ran "Charles the Second, by the grace of God, of England, Scotland, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, etc , to all to whom these presents shall come, greeting Whereas wee are given to understand that certain persons in and about our City of London, or the suburbs thereof, doe frequently assemble for the performing and acting of playes and enterludes for rewards, to which divers of our subjects doe for their entertainment resort which said playes, as we are informed, doe containe much matter of profanation and scurrility, soe that such kind of enter-tainments which if well managed might serve as moall instructions in humane life as the same are now used, doe for the most part tende to the debauchinge of the manneis of such as are present at them, and are very scandalous and offensive to all pious and well disposed persons We takeing the premises into our princely consideration, yett not holding it necessary totally to suppresse the use of theaters, because wee are assured that if the evils and scandall in the playes that now are or have bin acted were taken away, the same might serve as innocent and harmlesse divertissement for many of our subjects , and having experience of trust and skill of our trusty and well-beloved Thomas Killigrew, Esq , one of the Groomes of our Bedchamber, and of Sir William Davenant, Knight, for the purposes hereafter mentioned, doe hereby give and grante unto the said Thomas Killigrew and Su William Davenant full power and authority to erect two companies of players, consistunge respectively of such persons as they shall chuse and appoint, and to purchase, bulde, and erect, or hire at their charge, as they shall think fitt, two houses or theaters with all

a "monopoly" to its fortunate holders, giving to them, and to them only, the exclusive right of keeping a theatre and presenting theatrical performances. The natural and reasonable construction of such a privilege would be that it was to endure, like the patents, during the lifetime of the grantee, or during a certain number of years, but it could never have been intended that it was to have been triumphantly maintained and enforced for a period of nearly a century and a half. There were indeed occasional renewals of the patent, but, as the monopoly was maintained, they were merely formal, and in reality only strengthened the original title. The whole seems opposed to the current of English tradition and English law, and has the air of a relic

convenient roomes and other necessaries therunto appertayning, for the representation of tragedyes, comedyes, playes, operas, and all other entertainments of that nature in convenient places and likewise to settle and establish such payments to be paid by those that shall resort to see the said representacions perfoimed as either have been accustomely given and taken in the like kind, or as shall be reasonable in regard of the greate expences of scenes, musick, and such new decorations as have not been formerly used with further power to make such allowances out of that which they shall so receive to the actors and other persons employed in the said representations in both houses respectively as they shall think fitt, the said companies to be under the government and authority of them, the said Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant. And in regard to the extraordynary licentiousness that hath lately used in things of this nature, our pleasure is, that there shall be no more places of representation nor companies of actors of playes, or operas, and recitations, musick or representations by dancing and scenes and any other entertainments on the stage, in our Cities of London and Westminster, or in the liberties of them, than the two to be now erected by virtue of this authority. Nevertheless, we doe hereby by our authority royal strictly enioyne the said Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant that they doe not at any time hereafter cause to be acted or represented any play, enterlude, or opera, containing any matter of prophanation, scurrility, or obscenity, and wee doe further hereby authorize and commandem the said Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant to peruse all playes that have been formerly written, and to expunge all prophanesse and scurrility from the same before they be represented or acted. And this our grante and authority made to the said Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant shall be effectuall and remains in full force and virtue, notwithstanding any former order or direction by us given, for the suppression of playhouses and playes and any other entertainments of the stage Given, etc , August 21, 1660"

of feudalism It is curious that some such idea of the arbitrary duration of the privilege seems to have occurred to Palmer, the Attorney-General, for when it was submitted for his opinion, he seemed inclined to think "it was rather a matter for *toleration* than for a grant under the Great Seal." In other words, that the managers might be *allowed* to open and conduct their theatres even to the exclusion of others, and that anything more formal than this would be setting up a privilege independent of the Crown. As this, however, was merely in the nature of advice, no regard was paid to it, and the matter was completed.

The pretences put forward in this document were dishonest. The idea of any anxiety for morals coming from such a pair, one of whom was a professed agent for the King's pleasures, seems far-fetched. The existing playhouses were conducted with due propriety and regularity, particularly the Cockpit, where the pieces of Beaumont and Fletcher and Shakespeare were being performed. In any case, the short time during which they had been open seemed to offer little opportunity for any system of habitual irregularity. A cynical observer might have objected, and there must have been many who did, that the laxity was inspired and promoted by the Court, and indeed, Mr Pepys, only a few months later, was bewailing that "things were in very ill condition, there being so much emulation, poverty, and the vices of drinking, swearing, and loose amours," that he knew not what would be the end of it but confusion.

What influence the two managers possessed at the Court will be seen by the means they made use of to put down rivals, even before they had begun to use their privilege. The King was brought to write a letter to the Recorder, aldermen, and justices of London, informing them that "he hears that companies assemble at the Red Bull, the Cockpit, and Salis-

bury Court," and, again making use of a hypocritical pretext, that "they perform profane and obscene plays," he orders, therefore, that they be rigorously suppressed, under heavy penalties. This illustrates the distinction that existed between the power of the Court and that of the magistrate—the former merely constituting a theatre to be "disorderly" by calling the magistrates' attention to the fact that it had refused its sanction, the executive, as the guarantee for behaviour was withdrawn, presuming it to be *ipso facto* disorderly. The instability, too, of the patronage of Chailes and his Court is characteristically shown by the fact that, notwithstanding this solemn guarantee of an exclusive patent, some persons about the Court, in the December of the same year, succeeded in obtaining for one Jolly a licence to erect a theatre for the performance of such plays "as are free from all profanity and obscenity, notwithstanding any former grant to T Killigrew and Sir T. Davenant"\*\*

No time was lost in putting their large powers in force. Killigrew, casting about for a suitable house, fixed on a place known as "Gibbon's Tennis Court," situated in the mean and narrow slums of Vere Street, near Clare Market, where it now seems marvellous how the coaches and chairs of the persons of quality could have manœuvred. Here he set to work to build a theatre. His "co-farmer" Davenant, however, whose mind was of a more regular and far-seeing character, determined to proceed on broader and bolder principles. He first bethought him of securing a good company, leaving the choice of a theatre for later consideration. Seeing the rising excellence of

Sir Henry Herbert seems to allude to this piece of sharp practice in one of his "orders," obtained in the following year, for suppressing all stage-players, tumblers, and others going about with shows, etc. "some persons having, by commission secretly obtained from the King, acted plays and shows full of scandal, etc., abused this commission by selling them." This and the extract quoted above will be found in the Calendars, *passim*.

"Batterton," Noakes, and some others, who were playing at the Cockpit, he determined to be prompt in securing them, and, fortified with his patent, was able to enter into a formal agreement\*. It is a curious one, as showing how methodised the stage had grown, and how familiar with theatrical business was the gentleman manager.

The terms were moderate enough, but he reserved some more advantageous for the time when his new house should be completed. Accordingly, on November 15th, 1660, he opened his theatre with the new and "powerful" company, and by the close of the year 1660 both patentees had their houses open. Davenant was established at Salisbury Court, Killigrew at Clare Market. The former had compelled Batterton and the other players at the Cockpit to follow him, and further, to secure obedience, had taken care to have them created "King's servants," and for that purpose had them duly sworn in before Lord Manchester, then Lord Chamberlain, "to serve His Royal Highness the Duke of York." Killigrew's company were also sworn in †. The Cockpit, however, still

\* It is dated November 5th, 1660, and is between Sir T. Davenant and Thomas Batterton, T. Sheppy, Rob. Noakes, T. Lovell, and others, including Harris, a scene-painter. The manager was to "constitute, ordain, and erect them into a company," which was "publicly to act all manner of tragedies, comedies, and plays whatsoever" in any theatre in London or its suburbs. Until the new building should be erected, which, it was stipulated, should have "scenes," it was arranged that the performances should be at Salisbury Court, and the most minute arrangements were made as to the division of the profits. After the expenses of the night were defrayed, the balance was to be divided into fourteen shares, of which the manager was to receive four. He was to have the right of naming the concert of musicians.

† The following is the deed "Articles inter Charles Hart and 12 other actors and Sr Robert Howard and Tho Killigrew renteing the Earle of Bedford's lease and the said deed of 11 pts (referring to No II) and reciting —That whereas Sr Robert Howard, Thomas Killigrew, Chailes Hart, Michael Mohun, and the rest of the builders according to theire respective shares and enterestes to them respectively assigned in and by the sd Indre of 11 pts were erecting and then intended and agreed to erect a house or theater for the use of the said Charles Hart, Theophilus Bird, and the rest of the said socety and theire successors to represent and act comedyes, tragedyes, masques, and

remained open as well as the Red Bull, the former under the control of Davenant, whose actors occasionally appeared there

The arbitrary character of this privilege—companies being now limited to two, whereas before the Revolution there had been nearly twenty—was not slow to provoke indignant opposition. As might be expected, in some instances it produced hardships, for the rights of the old Master of the Revels, who seems to have been thrust aside by the young school of courtiers as an old-fashioned “fogy,” were entirely ignored. Some rumours of the step that was intended reached him, and a few days before the patent was granted he sent in an almost piteous remonstrance, urging his claims—his “forty-five years’ menial service to the Royal Family”—complaining also that

playes vpon the faithfull promise and agreement of them the said Charles Hart, Theophilus Bird, Michaell Mohun, Nicholas Burt, John Lacy, Robert Shatterell, Walter Chunn, William Cartwright, William Wintersall, Richaid Baxter, Edd Kinaston, Nicholas Blagden, and Thomas Loveday That they and such person or persons as should be from time to time admitt and taken into theire socyetye should as soone as the same could be finished and made fitt, vse the same for a theater or playhouse for acting and representing all playcs And that after the same should be finished the said company should not use any other house or place for that purpose without the speciall lycence of Sr Robert Howard, Thomas Killigrew, Charles Hart, Michaell Mohun, Nicholas Burt, John Lacy, Robert Shatterell, Walter Chunn, William Cartwright, and William Wintersall, first had and obtained in writing, and upon further promise and agreement That the said Charles Hart, Theophilus Bird, Michaell Mohun, and the rest of the actoys according to theire severall and respective shares and proporcons in the said recited Indre of Assgmt sett forth the sume of 3l 10s pr diem for every day the said house or thearie should be by them soe used It is therefore agreed that the said actoys should and would (soe soone as the said house should be finished and fitted) vse the same for the acting and representing of all playes and masques and should not afterwarde (without lycence) vse any other house or place for that purpose And that they the said actors and such other persons as should (*tempore in tempus*) be admitted into the said socyetye should pay vnto the said Sr Robert Howard and Mr Killigrew to and for the vse of themselves and the said other builder according to theire respective propoicon the sume of 3l 10s pr diem for every day the said house should be used or imployed by them or otherwise should pay share and divide to and amongst the said Sr Robert Howard, Mr Killigrew, and the builders theire excrs, etc put theire respective shares and interests in the said house the said sume of 3l 10s for every day the same theater should be so used,” etc

he had been falsely represented as consenting to the patent, which he entirely denied. The whole was "an unjust surprise," and he begged that His Majesty would revoke it or refer the matter to the Attorney-General. The weak but good-natured King, no doubt delighted at what shifted all trouble from himself, at once consented, no doubt with the privity of his two *protégés*, for when Palmer, the Attorney-General, proceeded on the 14th of September to hear the matter, they did not attend, but sent a letter to the arbitrator, telling him he was "freed of further hearing in the matter." But though they may have had their laugh at this "bamboozling" of the old Court official, they were to find that he was not to be trifled with, and for several years he contrived to harass them by proceedings at law, which the King was powerless to check. He shrewdly contrived to draw some of the actors into the quarrel, and embroiled them with the patentees, or rather the *monopolists*. Between these two powers claiming authority, the actors were almost persecuted. When Rhodes and the remnant of his company, after Davenant had picked the choicest, continued to play at the Cockpit, on the 8th of October he received a peremptory summons from the old Master of the Revels, commanding him "to attend" concerning his playhouse, and to bring with him such authority as he had for the erecting of the said house into a playhouse, "at his peril." The demand was treated with contempt, and the only reply given was that they had the King's authority.

Killigrew had naturally made use of his patent to force players to join his corps Rhodes' company, which included Burt, Wintersall, and Hart, he had suppressed in summary fashion by a warrant from the King, which, indeed, was but the logical sequence of his own patent. He then offered to treat and allow them to continue playing on the terms of their performing only at a new and proper theatre, of admitting

women only for the female characters, and of using dresses that harmonised with the scenes He also reserved the right of selecting the best of their performers for enlistment in "His Majesty's Company of Comedians." The former stipulations the patentee probably felt they were not likely to carry out The result was to leave the players quite helpless They had been forced to accept his terms, and thus secured tolerance for a few weeks The manager of the Cockpit company was presently to be assailed on the other flank, and on October 3<sup>rd</sup> received a peremptory notice from the old Master of the Revels, which was meant as an assertion of authority He required him to lower his prices from the "unusual and unreasonable rates lately taken at the playhouse-doors of the respective persons of quality that desire to refresh and improve themselves by the sight of your moral entertainments, which were constituted for profit and delight" They were to take the old rates and "noe more," also to send to him all their old plays, "that they may be reformed of prophanery and ribaldry," at their peril Then he artfully lets them know that they have to thank Mr Killigrew and his partner for these complaints, which they had made to the King, who had further cunningly made use of this "as part of their suggestions for their pretended power, and *for your late restraint.*" The spite and vexation of this official is apparent. No attention being paid to his admonitions, a royal warrant came down, closing their house for a second time. "All which," as they complained to the King, "ended in soe much per weeke to him, for which wee have leave to play and promise of his protection the which your Majesty knows he was not able to performe "

## CHAPTER III.

### THE GROWTH OF PATENTS AND OF THE CHAMBERLAIN'S POWER

THIS matter of patents, licences, and Lord Chamberlain's authority, which still exists, has often been a subject of mystery, and in our day excites angry protest as a relic of an unmeaning and arbitrary regulation. But even a slight or careless review of the domestic life of the City of London from the days of Elizabeth would suggest that this control had merely been diverted from the magistrates of the City itself, and that the disorders and excesses that attended this kind of entertainment made the regulation actually a matter of police. We have already hinted at this view of the case; but as the famous grant of a monopoly or patent to Killigrew and Davenant was what first gave fixed shape and finality to such restrictions, it seems necessary to go more fully into the history and various stages of the matter.

There would seem to have been always a sort of wantonness in all public gatherings—a tendency to break out into excess unless restrained, much as in the case of children at a school, by regulations of a severe kind. The players, as we have seen, formed a regular part of the royal retinue, and plays and masques an established mode of entertainment at the palace. Nobles also were allowed the same privilege, and

on any marriage or festival being held by peers, or indeed any person of quality or consideration, it was fashionable to celebrate it by some entertainment of this sort, as it was understood it was not to be for money, and therefore of a private character, no excess was likely to follow. It is curious that so lately as Garrick's first appearance in 1741, this distinction was in force, the performance being asserted to be "given gratis" The next step was to allow the public, on rare occasions, to see these privileged servants, but still under condition that the august patrons would guarantee their "servants'" good behaviour. But as these patrons included many persons of rank and position, a vast number of players became necessary—almost sufficient, in fact, to constitute a profession the guarantee, therefore, once the public became the audience, was wholly insufficient, and little more than a fiction Other authority, therefore, had to take order in the matter, and assume the responsibility of restraint, and either the Privy Council, which often regulated the police of the country, or the Lord Mayor and aldermen of the City, or the direct authority of the Court, or the Houses of Parliament, at different times would intervene In fact, from the days of Elizabeth to the Licensing Act, in a period of nearly two centuries, it will be seen that there was a constant struggle of all authorities to control this one particular class of the community—viz the players.

Now, the "entertainment of the stage" is liable to two kinds of abuse, which can be very well illustrated from what often takes place in common society. A man obtains a reputation for wit of a pleasant and amusing sort, which, if he have a disciplined and well-regulated mind, he maintains without offence to anyone. But if he be dependent on his wit for his place in society, he is likely to degenerate into a *fancieur*, and be reckless in his choice of persons and subjects

provided he succeed in amusing his company. Of this class are those coarse jesters, full of a "broad" humour, as it is called, and who are often without shame, decency, or fear. Of another class is the sarcastic humorist, who is "bitter" and caustic, and who, while able to "touch off" characters, is insensibly led by applause into ill-nature and even malignity. These two shapes of perversions of a pleasant and delightful gift represent abuses of the theatre which had to be restrained. The "servants" of the King or of the noble who supplied the intellectual diversion of plays were reduced to ridicule of persons and institutions, and to hits at things sacred or profane, otherwise they were likely to be dull. Hence the authority of a censor was required, and as the players were the King's "servants," nothing was more fitting than that the King himself or his deputy should have the power which the master of a house might have over his servants, to prevent them from saying what would be offensive to him or to others.

The second abuse might arise from that spurious shape of entertainment which, because it may be given on a stage, is confounded with the drama, and the privileges of which mere vulgar "entertainers" have so often claimed. Of this order were mere mimics, "laughter producers," or clowns, whose exertions were directed to the entertainment of the mob, and who, unchecked, were not likely to respect order or decency. This description of performer could only be regulated by the magistrates and police, and in the eye of such were naturally classed with tumblers, cheating pedlers, "bearwards," and other troublesome vagrants. The same disorders attended all, and within the memory of the present generation the strolling company, the exhibitor of bears and monkeys, and the fortune-teller were equally obnoxious to the beadle and the village justice. This distinction has never been sufficiently

borne in mind ; and it explains those harsh Acts of Parliament which appeared to bear so severely on the stage and its professors.

As the purpose of this work is to trace the course of the stage and its professors in their relations to the law and society in general, it might be expected that our investigation should go back to the earliest days. This, however, has been done so abundantly by Malone, Chalmers, and Collier, and the subject is so vast and, compared with the later progress, so uninteresting, that I prefer giving a review of the various acts of the authorities, the Crown, and magistrates, which will be found sufficient for our purpose. Going back to the mysteries and moralities belongs to the purely antiquarian ; what now follows will be amply sufficient to help us to a view of the relations between the players and the authorities \*

In restraint of theatrical exhibitions it will be found that, from the days of Henry the Eighth to our own, there existed a full and strong current of Acts of Parliament, Privy Council orders, and municipal proclamations, all directed to the control, regulation, and even harassing of such entertainments. It will be interesting to review this long line of protective restraints, which would almost seem to prove that such shows and exhibitions were held to be a disturbance of social order. We find that by 24 Henry VIII were restrained all rhymers or players from singing in songs, or playing in interludes, anything that should contradict the newly-received doctrines. There was also a proclamation issued, forbidding evil-disposed persons, "after their own brains, or in playing of interludes," to preach against the new religion. In 1543, "certain players belonging to the Lord Warden were committed to the Counter for playing against an order of the mayor." In 1543, the first

\* For this review I am chiefly indebted to the laborious MS. collections of the late "O Smith" in the British Museum

Act of Parliament, styled "for the advancement of true religion," after again alluding to the preaching by means of books and plays, imposed a fine of 10*l* and three months' imprisonment to be inflicted on anyone "playing in interludes or rhyming any matter" contrary to the new religion. Songs, plays, and interludes that have for their object the rebuking of vices and the setting forth of virtue are exempted. Two years later it is to be noted that Sir Thomas Carvarden was appointed Master of the Revels, probably the first officer of the kind. The object of such proclamations is clearly the maintenance of public order, akin to the power magistrates use in election or riotous times of closing public-houses. In 1549, by a proclamation, all plays were prohibited from August 9th till November 1st, on the ground of being "seditious." In 1551, "players attached to the household of noblemen" were required to have leave to act from the Privy Council. In 1552, on April 18th, a proclamation was issued forbidding all playing or printing without leave from the Privy Council. And we find an order from the Privy Council for the release of a poet "which is in the Tower for making plays." A proclamation, in the month of April, 1552, was "set forth by the King's Majesty with the advice of his Council, for the reformation of vagabonds, tellers of news, players, and printers without licence. And because," it goes on, "divers . . . players of interludes do . . . play whatsoever *any light and fantastical head listeth to invent and devise*, whereby many inconveniences hath and daily doth arise and follow, His Majesty chargeth that no common players do play any interlude, play, or matter, without they have special licence to show for the same in writing under His Majesty's sign, or signed by six of His Majesty's Privy Council."\* In 1553, on August 18th, a proclamation of Queen Mary's was issued "for reformation of busy meddlers in

\* Found by Mr Collier among the Society of Antiquaries' proclamations.

matters of religion, and for redress of preachers, printers, and players" In the year 1556, Lord Rich was required by the Privy Council to put a "stop to a certain stage-play about to be played in Essex, and to inquire into the whole" From a letter of thanks, written by the Council later to Lord Rich, it would appear that this was a harmless matter, as the players were "honest householders and quiet persons," so he was ordered to set them at liberty, "but to have special care to stop like amusements."

In 1556, April 30th, the Privy Council, learning that certain lewd persons, to the number of six or seven, in a company naming themselves to be servants unto Sir Thomas Leek, *and wearing his livery and badge on their sleeves*, have wandered about those north parts, and represented certain plays and interludes containing naughty and seditious matter touching the King and Queen, "it was ordered that such plays aie to be prohibited, *the servants* to be sought for and ordered according to their deserts;" which was followed in the next year (1557) by a general order from the Star Chamber, requiring the justices in every shire to suffer no players

In the same year, the Privy Council, learning that a lewd play, called "A Sackfull of News," was to be performed at the Boar's Head, without Aldgate, "instantly sent a letter to the Lord Mayor, commanding him to apprehend and commit the players and send the play-book in to the Privy Council" As the whole proved to be harmless, an order came to release them, with a notice to all players, "forbidding performance, save between November 1st and Shrovetide, and then only such as are seen and allowed by the Ordinary."

In 1558, we have an Act of Parliament (1 Eliz.) by which "no person was to abuse the Common Prayer in any enterludes, plays, songs," etc., and in May, 1559, a sort

of general proclamation, applying to the whole kingdom. And though it did not appear to touch the players or "servants," it virtually reached them through the plays, or it forbade all plays unless licensed by mayors of cities, by the lords-lieutenants, or by two justices, and no such piece to be licensed that touched matters of religion or government.

As the playhouse in Shoreditch—supposed to be the first in London—was built in 1570, it gave occasion to many goodly citizens to pray the Queen to have the theatres closed, and accordingly those in Gracechurch Street, Bishops-gate and Ludgate Hill, and Whitefriars were levelled. But these were merely temporary scaffolds at the inns Cross Keys and Bull

These severe measures seem to have had little effect, for from this year till 1600 we find no less than fifteen companies attached to different noblemen—such as Sir R Lane, Lord Clinton, Lord Robert Dudley (whose corps included James Burbage, Perkyn, and William Johnson), Lord Warwick, the Lord Chamberlain, Lord Strange, Lord Derby—and the Queen herself. It was, therefore, not unexpected to find a formal Act of Parliament, dealing with them, in 1572. This was the 14 Eliz c 5. All fencers, "bearwards, common players in interludes, and minstrels not belonging to barons or towards any other honourable personages of greater degree, all jugglers, pedlers, tinkers, and petty chapmen; which said fenceis, bearwards, common players in interludes, and minstrels, as shall wander abroad and not have licences of two justices of the peace at the least, shall be deemed and dealt with as rogues and vagabonds." The noblemen's companies are probably exempted, because the aristocratic masters were responsible for their behaviour. But it is evident that the gangs of itinerant players and showmen, collecting crowds

and demoralising villages, uttering jests, indecent or otherwise, against the laws, had become a nuisance, hence that offensive designation which has wounded the pride of every actor, and was flung in the face of Garrick by Junius—"rogues and vagabonds" But it is clear it does not apply to the player, who was here represented by the organised companies belonging to the barons It may be doubted, indeed, if any of the strolling companies whom, in the last century, the justices chased from village to village or clapped in the parish stocks, could have been classed as players A player is nothing without his theatre, strolling is playing in barns \*

In 1574, the Lord Mayor procured various bye-laws of the Common Council to regulate the performance of plays within the City, and the Privy Council wrote to the Lord Mayor to advise their lordships what causes he hath to restrain plays, to the intent that their lordships may the better answer such as desire liberty for the same Thus were the City and Privy Council working harmoniously together

But, harassed sufficiently by justices, Lord Mayor, and Privy Council, and at the same time the more respectable being under the servitude of the barons, it was felt that the royal power only could give immunity from annoyance. This was, in truth, merely extending the barons' privilege. Accordingly, we find that on May 7th, 1574, a patent under the Great Seal was granted to James Burbage, John Perkyn,

\* It is quite plain, then, what these common "players of interludes" were —amusing delineators without a theatre, admitted to the inn-yard, entirely dependent on their powers of mimicry, buffoonery, or scurrility for the due entertainment of the audience Such would attract great crowds, and disorders would ensue The superior branch of the profession, which exhibited decorously at the palace or noblemen's houses, was of course unaffected by those regulations

John Lanham, William Johnson, and Robert Wilson, servants to the Earl of Leicester they to use, etc., "the arts and faculties of playing comedies, tragedies, interludes, stage-plays, and such-like as they have already used, as well for the recreation of our loving subjects as for our solace and pleasure when we shall think good to see them, as well within the liberties and freedoms of any of our cities, towns, etc."

Again, in 1574, the Court granted the players a passport to go to London, and to be well used on the voyage, while on the same day the Privy Council sent directions to the Lord Mayor to admit them within the City, and to be otherwise favourably used. But in the following year, on December 6th, an Act of Common Council was published, setting out what "disorders and inconveniences" resulted from the performance of plays, etc., and enacting, under fine and imprisonment, that "all plays to be performed in the City shall be read by persons appointed by the Lord Mayor and Court, and his licence shall be necessary."

Notwithstanding the patent, the Lord Mayor and Privy Council seem to have been too much for Mr Burbage, for we may suppose his right to *play* was admitted, but they refused to allow him to open a playhouse. In the year 1576, Burbage and his company opened a playhouse in Blackfriars, and "this site," we are told, "was chosen in consequence of their being excluded from the City owing to the Lord Mayor's orders."

In 1577, on August 1st, the Privy Council directed Lord Wentworth, the Master of the Rolls, and the Lieutenant of the Tower, to allow no plays until Michaelmas, owing to the sickness from the heat, just as the Lord Mayor had done in the City. In the next year, on January 13th, the Privy Council directed the Lord Mayor to give order that one Droussiano and his company may play in the City and liberties

between that day and the first week of Lent. In 1579, the Privy Council directed the Lord Mayor to allow no plays during Lent; and two years later plays on Sundays were forbidden, and on holidays till after evening prayer.

In 1581, we find the players appealing piteously to the Privy Council, on the ground of having to support their wives and children, that the sickness was now "well slacked." In April, 1582, the Privy Council accordingly wrote to the Lord Mayor, directing or "praying" him to revoke his order as to holidays, but not as to playing on Sundays, "which to do they are, by their lordships' order, expressly denied and forbidden" In 1583—January 13th being a Sunday—on the fall of a gallery in Paris Garden Theatre, by which eight persons were slain, suit was made to the Lords of the Council *to banish plays wholly from London*, and letters were obtained to banish them wholly on the Sabbath

The patent to Burbage was to be followed by an important step, namely, the constitution of a body known as "His Majesty's Servants" In the year 1583, at the request of Sir F Walsingham, and with the advice of the Master of the Revels, twelve principal actors were selected, from all the noblemen's companies ("servants of Lord Derby," etc), and were sworn "His Majesty's Comedians and Servants" \* Eight of these gentlemen received an annual allowance of 3*l* 6*s* 8*d*, with liveries as grooms of the chamber This at once shows the absurdity of the title which comedians in the last century were fond of claiming, as these players were certainly in the King's service, and officers of his Court by regular appointment.

In 1587, the Stationers' Company gave a licence to John Charlwood for the sole printing of playbills If any trouble

\* Stowe's Chronicle.

should arise, Charlwood to bear the charges. In 1591, July 1st, Sir Henry Herbert confirmed the King's Company's patent "to travel for a year" In 1593, August 29th, we have a warrant to Lord Essex's company, authorising them to play anywhere beyond seven miles from London. In 1596, certain inhabitants petitioned the Privy Council that the players might not be allowed "to repair and render more convenient" their Blackfriars station, and that it might be "shut up" and closed, a counter petition was also addressed to them, signed Pope, Burbage, Heming, Phillips, Shakespeare, Kempe, Sly, and others, "the owners and players" of this "private house," that they may be allowed to finish the alterations and preparations, "and they may not be prohibited from acting"

We now come to another Act of Parliament—viz. that of 1597, the 39 Eliz. By it, "all common players, etc., wandering abroad to be adjudged rogues and vagabonds," saving those players belonging to any baron of the realm, or any other person of greater degree, to be authorised to play under this hand and seal. The meaning of this, it would appear, was to save the more orderly companies of barons from annoyance. They were to be allowed to "wander" on showing the licence of the employer.

Meanwhile, in spite of opposition, regular theatres were rising, among others the well-known Fortune, built by Alleyn \* This house was situated between Whitecross Street and Golden Lane. Between 1570 and 1600, Mr. Collier tells us, there had been built the Theatre, 1570, the Curtain, 1580, the

\* His bill of charges has been preserved

What the Fortune cost me

Nov 1599

First for the lease to brewe	.	.	.	.	£240
Then for building the playhouse	:		:		520
For other prrivate buildings of my own.	.	.	.	.	120
					—
So that it cost me for a lease	.	.	.	.	£880

Blackfriars, 1576, the Whitefriars, 1576, the Newington, 1580, the Rose, 1585, the Hope, 1585, Paris Garden, 1588, the Globe, 1594, the Swan, 1595, the Fortune, 1599\* With the beginning of the century we find the influence of King James's Court at work, the Privy Council rebuking the justices of Middlesex for the multitude of stage plays and playhouses. And on May 19th, 1603, a very important limitation followed, being the adoption of all licensing powers by the Crown On that day an Act was passed, depriving the nobility of the power of licensing comedians as their servants But His Majesty King James granted a flesh licence to Shakespeare, Burbage, and the rest, as his servants, to play not only in the Globe but anywhere in the kingdom

In 1606, we hear of an Act, 3 Jac I c 21, to prevent "the profane use of the Holy name of God, or of Christ Jesus, or of the Holy Ghost, of the Trinity, in any play, under a penalty of 10*l.*" In 1613, on June 29th and 30th, one of the earliest of the long series of theatrical fires took place. The Globe Theatre was burnt down "by the negligent discharging of a peal of ordnance during the acting of 'Henry VIII'" "The burning of the Globe or Playhouse on the Bankside cannot escape you, which fell out by a peal of chambers, that I know not upon what occasion were to be used in the play. The tampin or stopple of one of them, lighting in the thatch that covered the house, burned it down to the ground in less than two hours, with a dwelling-house adjoining, and it was a great marvaille and fair grace of God that the people had so little harme, having but two narrow doors to get out"

In 1613, on July 13th, Sir George Buck, Master of the Revels, received 20*l.* as his fee for a licence for a new playhouse in the Whitefriars. In this year, too, the Swan and the

In 1600, on June 22nd, came an order from the Privy Council restraining the number of playhouses to two—viz the Globe in Bankside, and the Fortune

Rose were shut up. In 1614, the Globe was rebuilt in a fairer manner than before. In 1615, on January 4th, a Privy Seal for a patent had been granted to one Rossiter and others for a new theatre without the liberties. They proceeded to convert the house of a lady of title on Cuddle Wharf, near the church of St. Anne, into a theatre. The Lord Mayor and aldermen obtained an order from the Privy Council that no theatre should be erected in that place. They proceeded with the work, and it was almost finished when, by order of the King, it was pulled down. In 1620, we find a patent, a remarkable concession, made to King James's well-beloved servants to act at the Globe, the Bankside, and Blackfriars Theatres.

The unlucky Fortune was destroyed in 1622. "On Sunday night there was a great fire at the Fortune, the first playhouse in this town. It was quite burnt down in two hours, and all their apparel and play books lost, whereby these poor companions are quite undone"\*

In July, we find that Lee, Parkins, Wooth, Bass, Blaney, Cumber, and Robbins, under the name of the late comedians of Queen Anne, received a warrant from the Privy Seal to bring up children as actors—to be called Children of the Revels.

In this year there were five principal flourishing companies—the King's at the Globe and Blackfriars, the Prince's at the Curtain, the Palsgrave's at the Fortune; the Revels at the Bull, the Queen of Bohemia's, or Lady Elizabeth's, at the Cockpit.

In the reign of Charles the First there was an additional house in Salisbury Court. By an Act, 3 Car. c. 1, plays were forbidden on Sundays, yet masques were constantly performed at the Court on Sundays, however, 3s. 4d. was the slight fine for every offence.

\* Letter from Chamberlain—Birch Collection

Provost Marshal to seize on all players. In 1655, it was announced contemptuously that "the players at the Red Bull and all the *Jack Puddings* at Southwark Fair listed themselves for soldiers" As Major Moon and others had enlisted in the King's as officers, the Jack Puddings were possibly common soldiers.

It was in the following year that we encounter the luckless Prynne again, and under unexpected conditions. The unfortunate man, notwithstanding his barbarous treatment, was later to recant all, owing, as he says, to the violence of the parliamentary party. In 1649, he issued a tract called, "Mr. William Prynne, his Defence of Stage-plays, or a Retractation of a former Book of his called *Histrio-mastix*"

As if this army were fully bent, and most trayterously and maliciously set to put down and depresso all the King's Friends, not onely in Parliament *but in the very Theaters*, they have no care of Covenant or any thing else, but being most fædifragous would deprive the King of all his Rights and Prerogatives, which they are bound by the Covenant to maintain, and was it not alwayes an allowed Prerogative to Kings and Great Princes to have Players for their Recreations.

But now I know what the malicious, ill-spoken, clamorous and obstreperous people will object against me, namely, that I did once write a Book against Stage-plays, called *Histrio-mastix*, for which I underwent a cruel censure in the Star-chamber I confesse it is true, I did once so, but it was when I had not so clear a light as now I have, and it is no disparagement for any man to alter his judgment upon better information, besides it was done long ago, and when the King (whose vertues I did not then so perfectly understand) governed without any controul, which was the time that I took the better to shew my conscience and courage, to oppose that power which was the highest, but had I truly known the King, I must confesse with sorrow, I should not have compared him to *Nero* the most wicked of the Roman

Emperors (as I did in that book) for loving of Stage-playes, nor have given the Queen those bitter and cruell words of whore and strumpet, for playing a part in Mr. *Montague's* Pastorall, but I have suffered for that long ago, and am now ready to suffer, in discharging my conscience, under what power so ever is now set up to Martyr me.

But that Playes are lawfull things, and are to be allowed as recreations for honest men, I need not quote many Authors to prove it, it will serve the turn, if I do but tell you that many good men have been Authors of Comædies and Trægedies, and many of them Christians (*Buchanon, Grotius, Hensius, Baclarius*), there are also many ancient Comædians and Tragædians among the Heathen, which were men of no ill note (*Menander, Soploches, Aeschylus, Euripides, Aristophanes, Terentius, Plautus, Seneca*), and whereas I did quote many Fathers and other Ancient Christian Authors against Stage-playes, I confess I was not perfectly advised in all the circumstances belonging to them, being not such Plays as were written and acted in *England* of late, for the Recreacion of our most gracious King and Queen, and many of their best friends and therefore distinctions ought to be used in those cases, for all Plays are not of one nature, and vertues, magnanimity, chastity, sobriety, temperance, justice, modesty, goodness, etc may be taught in Plays, and many men have been made the better for seeing of them. And whereas divers objections have been made against Stage-playes, for that many of them are profane, many of them have swearing and blaspheming in them, many of them have cozening, cheating, ledgeman, fraud, deceit, jugglings, impostures, and other lewd things, which may teach young people evil things, and corrupt good maners, I do also my self speak against such Playes, and will not at all maintain them, much lesse would I be content to suffer in such a cause as that were But that honest Playes may be tolerated, and not to be forbidden by any Army under heaven, I do maintain before all the world. It is true that some have objected against Stage-Playes, that there is an unlawful thing used in them, which is against a place in the Old Testament (and is urged by Dr *Reynolds* and other reverend men against Playes) namely, that men or boyes do wear the apparel of women, being expressly forbidden

in the Text To this I answer, first, that if this be all, it is a fault may be easily amended; and we may do in *England*, as they do in *France*, *Italy*, *Spain*, and other places, where those which play womens parts, are women indeed, and so there no offence against that place, it may be objected. I therefore do desire rather to maintan that tenet, That mens putting on of womens apparel is not again the Scripture in a plain and ordinary sence, for it had a farther meaning, as one of the Rabbies affirms, for it was a custom of men in those days, when they prayed to *Rinimon* who was *Mars*, that they put on womens apparel to seem like to *Venus*, and so to please that false God, and women, when they prayed to *Ashtaoosh* who was *Venus*, put on mens apparel, to seem like to *Mars*, and so to please that goddesse. And therefore I think, because this scruple is satisfied, I may conclude that good Plays, which are not profane, lewd, bad, blasphemous or ungodly, may be acted, and that this wicked and tyrannical Army ought not to hinder, to impede, let, prohibit, or forbid the acting of them; which I dare maintain to all the world, for I was never afryad to suffer in a good cause

Such was the poor wretch's recantation, one of the most extiaordinary kind, considering he was actually ealess from his devotion to the opposite cause.

There were now, however, signs of a change Plays were being tolerated or "winked" at; and in 1658, when Sir W. Davenant was exhibiting his operas at the Cockpit, it was ordered at Whitehall that there should be inquiry made into the whole subject of playing This was but mild ordinance after all.

In London, however, the taste for stage entertainment still continued so strong, that though the Lord Mayor and justices were not inclined to favour them, they were obliged to license various companies to perform in "inn-yards" and other places. The players of the Court, and often nobles, being forced to remain idle in the intervals between the festivities, were naturally eager to display their abilities and make money But

with a sort of disorderly instinct, and perhaps taking pride in the patronage that protected them, they delighted in wantonly asserting their independence, by playing even on Sundays, by playing at night instead of the daytime, which brought about disorders, and above all drew crowds at times of contagion. When, therefore, in the year 1573, Lord Sussex, the Lord Chamberlain, applied to the Lord Mayor in behalf of one Holms, that he might have the appointment of places for players and interludes within the City—in fact, speaking on behalf of the Court, he met a firm refusal, and for these sensible reasons. “Howbeit, the case is such and so nearly touching the governing of this city in *one of the greatest matters thereof*, namely, the assembling of multitudes, and regard to be had to sundry inconveniences, whereof the peril is continually upon every occasion to be foreseen by the rulers of this city, that we cannot well assent that the said appointment of places be committed to any private person”\* It might seem odd that the Court should allow its licence to be thus affected by the interference of another body. But the royal permission was given on the assumption that the concession was not abused nor hostile to the good order of society, and further, with understanding that the performance should be of a “legitimate” kind.

A short time afterwards we find the City authorities adopting some strict regulations, which are highly significant, and which furnish a perfect picture of the abuses to which mere theatrical shows had led. Such were “the occasion of frays and quarrels” among the youth of the town, as also “the evil practices of incontinency” which arose from giving pieces “in great inns” or inn-yards, like The Three Swans in Bishopsgate Street or The Tabard, which “had chambers and several places adjoining the stages and galleries.” It may be

\* “Gentleman’s Magazine,” vol lxi p 412

readily conceived that the first of these excesses arose from quarrels, the want of seats, or proper arrangement, the other debauchery from the galleries, which looked into the yard opening into the inn. There was no one to maintain order in the rampant throng, or the distinction between stage and audience. Robberies, said the authorities, were common, accidents often took place from over-crowding and the breaking down of the stage or galleries. In time of contagious sickness, disease was spread or even engendered, and, finally, to keep the noisy, wanton crowd in good-humour, seditious language, unseemly jests, and scurrilous mimicry were employed. Finally, they persisted in playing on Sundays and holidays, and after dark instead of in the afternoon.

This state of things, which has often occurred in the history of the stage, was certainly enough to cause alarm to the grave and strict magistracy of the City, and they proposed these remedies. "Now, in order," said they, "that the *lawful, honest, and comely* use of plays, pastimes, and recreations be in good sort only permitted, and that provision be had for the safety and civil ordering of the people," it was decreed that no play should be given in an innkeeper's tavern, without submitting the piece to be perused by the Mayor or someone appointed by him. Anyone failing in this was to be punished with imprisonment for fourteen days. In any case, no one was to play without a licence, for which he was to pay—as with the French theatres of our time—"such sums to the poor" as may be ordered. Exception was made in favour of noblemen's companies in a "*private place*," provided, however, that there was "*no unchaste, seditious, or unmete*" matter in the piece, and that no money was taken at the doors. The Mayor, too, was to be the judge of what was a private house when there was doubt.

It will be seen that there was here a censorship almost the

same as that which the Master of the Revels or Lord Chamberlain exercised. People have been often puzzled as to the origin of this right of perusal on the part of the Court. It was really an extension of that *permisso superiorum*, or leave to print, found on the back of the title in old books, for acting a piece was but another shape of publishing it. But when the *permisso superiorum* for books grew obsolete and that right could not be exercised, the right of supervising or overlooking plays did not go with it, as the latter was incident to the other right, of controlling, allowing persons to play, or preventing them. With such an important privilege it was easy to make it dependent on this censorship, and thus the allowing a right of perusal would have been made a condition. The ordinary magistrate, who had an Act of Parliament to support him in treating the player as a "vagrom" if he were found "wandering" without a licence, could, as a matter of course, constitute himself censor of what was to be spoken. It was curious, too, that when the status of the actor became assured, and he was protected by formal legal decisions from that straining of the Acts of Elizabeth and others, which would make him out as a disturber of the peace, the power of an Act of Parliament should have been shifted to the censorship, which, under the name of the Licensing Act, was passed in 1737.

It was scarcely surprising, then, that the players should begin to complain that "they were piteously persecuted by the Lord Mayor and aldermen," and that, though they thought that their state had been long since settled, "it was now so uncertain, they could not build upon it"\*. And it was, no doubt, owing to this sense of oppression that they fell upon the device of choosing places to perform in, outside the jurisdiction of the City. To this is owing the rise of houses like the Blackfriars and the Bankside across the river. Here,

\* Letter of "one Mash," given by Mr Collier, p. 304.

again, the abuse caused the interference of authority, and, at the opening of this century, the Privy Council were receiving complaints of "the manifold abuses and disorders" arising from the "many houses erected and employed in and about the City of London for common stage-plays, and which were the daily occasion of the idle, riotous, and dissolute life of great numbers of people. And yet, nevertheless, it is considered that the use and exercise of such plays (not being evil in itself) may, with a good order and moderation, be suffered in a well-governed State, and that Her Majesty being pleased sometimes to take delight and recreation in the sight and hearing of them, some order is fit to be taken for the allowance and maintenance of such persons as are thought meetest in that kind to yield Her Majesty recreation and delight, and consequently of the houses that must serve for public playing to keep them in exercise."

Here we find both the powerful and despotic body, the Privy Council, and the administrators of the City of London at one as to the subject position of the players. The magistrates had "put down" the lower class of "common players," the performers at inn-yards, and the like, while the more regular performers were still to be under the "bail," as it were, of a noble or royal person, and though they were allowed to play for the public, it was with a view of keeping them in practice and training them for the Court. There was a third company playing, as the Council had heard, who were to be considered as intruders, "as not having prepared any plays for the Queen," and this was to be forthwith suppressed. Such was the state of things in London when the seventeenth century opened.

An order was now issued strictly limiting the theatres to two—one for each side of the river, charging the Lord Mayor and justices to see that it was carried out, and to commit

to prison all who should disobey. Nor was this severity undeserved, if we may accept as true the earnest remonstrances of the inhabitants of the Blackfriars district when it was announced that the theatre was to be rebuilt. They protested that it was literally impossible to carry on their trade, owing to "the great recourse to the plays, especially of coaches, their commodities being broken and beaten off their stalls." The "recourse of coaches" was so great, that the inhabitants in an afternoon could not take in provisions of beer, coal, etc. "If there should happen any fire, no order could be taken for quenching it, on account of the disorder and number of coaches. Christenings and burials are many times disturbed. Persons of honour and quality that dwell in the parish are restrained by the number of coaches from going out or coming home." It was thus that about one hundred years later a small theatre at Goodman's Fields demoralised a whole district. The policy of the authorities in restraining the number of petty houses of entertainment, or in requiring persons of condition to answer for their being conducted properly, was therefore a reasonable one. It would be an interesting inquiry to try and discover how it was the stage seemed for about one hundred and fifty years to be inseparable from such disorders; but this only proves that during all times some sort of control, in the shape of patent or licence, is absolutely necessary, even for decency's sake.

This becomes more clear when we find that in patents—notably in the first one to Burbage, of 1574—it is carefully stipulated that the liberty given shall be subject to all the rights of the Master of the Revels—*i.e.*, of the Chamberlain, whose officer he was. We might naturally feel curious to "verify the powers" of this important officer. A glance at the patent of Sir J. Ashley will show us that he was authorised by the Sovereign directly "To warn, command, and appoint,

in all places within this our realm . . . all and every player and players, writer to playmakers, either *belonging to any nobleman* or otherwise . . . to appear before him with all such plays . or shows . . . and them to present and recite before our said servant . . . whom we authorise to order and reform, authorise and put down, as shall be thought meet or unmeet Should any disobey, he may attach them and commit them to ward. We command you [*i.e.*, the mayors, justices, etc.] to assist him” \*

And a little incident that occurred in 1589 shows that these two authorities co-operated in this relation Certain players having introduced matters reflecting on the State and on religion, the Master of the Revels applied to the Lord Mayor to silence them. The two players, treating his orders with contempt, were committed to prison for playing. Here we see how the authority worked. The actors had played matter for which the Master of the Revels had not given leave, and they became disentitled to protection, and were included in the catalogue of vagrants performing without a licence, and liable to arrest by the magistrates †

It is, however, plain from this that there was really no “sanction” for the Chamberlain’s authority, for the only means of enforcing a penalty in case of disobedience was *an appeal to the Privy Council or a request to the Lord Mayor to exert his authority.* The King, indeed, gave authority to his officer to “attach them and commit them to ward,” but this was a stretch of prerogative that could scarcely be brought to a legal test, and the presentation of the Chamberlain’s warrant to arrest a player, because he “had not appeared before him,” or “recited” such plays, was not likely to have much force It therefore rested on the power of the justices and a certain complaisance to the Sovereign, the Chamberlain

\* Quoted in Mr Collier’s “Annals”      † Strype’s edition of Stowe

being, as it were, informer and prosecutor. It would seem even that the Court had felt this weakness, for at one time the City was applied to to appoint an officer to read the plays, but it declined. Thus in the year 1634 the King was informed of a "scandalous comedy," in which the King of Spain, Count Gondomar, and others, were personified. He wondered, he said, at their boldness, and also that none of his own Ministers had reported it to him. The author and performers were to be cited before the Council, those most faulty imprisoned, and the comedy examined \*

Thus far we have attempted to account for the origin and growth of this apparently exceptional sort of jurisdiction. And this led us to the shape of authorisation with which we are immediately concerned, namely, the Patent †

\* Calendar of State Papers, August 12th, 1624

† It will be seen by the opening sentence of Davenant's patent (p 78), that Charles the First, in the fourteenth year of his reign, had already given a patent to the same person

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RESTORATION THEATRES.

RETURNING now to the course of the theatre itself, it will be recollectcd that we left the players engaged in disputes with the Master of the Revels, their “protector,” as he was assumed to be, though indeed, so far from Sir H Herbert protecting them, “he had been a constant disturbance” to them But the indefatigable officer, stung by the sense of his wrongs, was to cause them yet more constant disturbance His rights were fortified by usage and precedent, and he had certainly a claim to compensation for the loss of his profits and perquisites. These would appear to have amounted to at least 600*l* a-year ; levied, he had to admit, on the actors, who were glad at least to welcome that part of the new oppression which freed them from such a tax. He had a fee of two guineas on every new play, and one on each old one. At Christmas and Lent he received from each company a gratification of 6*l* He had also his benefit, which was worth 100*l* a-year to him , a share from each of the four companies, which was equal to 100*l*. a-year Even the existing companies had covenanted to pay him per week, from August, 1660, over and above his usual fees, the sum of 12*l*. But not a farthing had he received from them in any shape. Forty-five years had he served. He

## THE RESTORATION THEATRES.

had purchased his place, and had received it from the late King as a grant for two lives under the Great Seal "Now," he added, in a burst of spite, "to be ousted by Sir W Davenant, a person who had created the office of Master of the Revels to Oliver the Tyrant, and who wrote the first and second parts of the 'Spaniards in Peru,' acted at the Cockpit in Oliver's favour, to make Oliver's cruelties appear mercies, also a poem in vindication of his government, and an epithalamium in praise of his daughter'" He then artfully described the profits his two foes were drawing from their theatres, "as he was credibly informed" He complained they were overcharging the audience Before long a warrant was sent to the actors at the Cockpit in Drury Lane by Tom Browne, October 13th, 1660, at the instance of Sir H Howard

Whereas several complaints have been made against you to the King's most excellent Majesty by Mr Killigrew and Sir W Davenant, concerning the unusual and unseasonable rates taken at your playhouse doors of the respective persons of quality that desire to refresh or improve themselves by the sight of your moral entertainments, which were constituted for profit and delight And the said complaints made use of by the said Mr. Killigrew and Sir W Davenant as part of their suggestions for their pretended power and for your late restraint And whereas complaints have been made thereof formerly to me, wherewith you were acquainted, of innovations and exactions not allowed by me And that the like complaints are now made, that you do practise the said exactions in taking of excessive and unaccustomed rates upon the restitution of you to your liberty . These are, therefore, in His Majesty's name to require you, and every one of you, to take from the persons of quality and others as daily frequent your playhouse, such usual and accustomed rates only as were formerly taken at the Blackfriars by the late company of actors there, and no more nor otherwise for any new or old play that shall be acted in the said playhouse And you are hereby further required to bring or send to me all such old plays as you do intend to

act at your said playhouse, that they may be reformed of profaneness and ribaldry, at your peril. Given at the office of the Revels.

HENRY HERBERT

To Mr Michael Mohun, and the rest of the Cockpit Play-house in Drury Lane. October 13, 1660

This and much more was urged in an action which he brought against Mohun and others of Killigrew's company, and which was tried in December, 1661, on the ground that they played without a licence. He succeeded in obtaining a verdict. This was of course virtually against Killigrew. He also brought two actions against Davenant, in one of which, that before a Westminster jury, he failed, it being declared that he had no jurisdiction over any players, and no right to demand any fees from them. In the other action, a City of London jury found that the Master of the Revels was to be allowed the correction of plays, and fees for so doing, but not to give players any licence or authority to play, it being proved that no players were ever authorised in London or Westminster to play by the commission of the Master of the Revels, but by authority immediate from the Crown \*

This was clear enough, yet, as though his right had been maintained by the verdict, the very next day the irrepressible censor despatched an order to Davenant's theatre, forbidding

\* He might reasonably complain of the soldiers who entered *without payment*. "Whereas I am informed that there are divers private souldrs of his Mats army that doe forcibly enter into the theaters and playhouses in and about the city of London to the disturbance of the gentlemen and others there present, and to the endangering the breach of his Majts peace. These are therefore to require all officers and souldrs under my com'and to forbear any such forcible intrusion and nott to enter into the sd houses without the consent of the owners or doorkeeprs upon paine of being punished for the same at the direction of a court martial. Given under my hande and seale att the Cockpit, the 28 day of August, 1660" Mr Bullen recently discovered this curious paper in the British Museum

the players to perform. No wonder that Davenant in despair “besought the King to interfere,” and save him from being further “molested.” He did not ask to be excused from having to pay him his pretended fees (he never having sent for any), but to be protected in the right performance of plays, which, he reminds the King, he is authorised to present by patent and several warrants. This seems to have brought about a result, and in the same month the Master of the Revels succeeded in reconciling himself with Killigrew, and “a firm amity” was settled “to be concluded for life between them.” The old fees to be paid on the old scale, damages and costs of the two actions against Mohun, the actor, and others, to be discharged by Mr Killigrew, and further a present of 50*l* to be distributed. Finally, and most triumphant result of all, he was to assist Sir Henry Herbert, and “neither directly nor indirectly aid or assist Sir W. Davenant or any of his pretended company.”

This would seem to show that dissensions had arisen between the patentees, whose interests, connected with rival theatres, would naturally clash. Nor was the litigious Master of the Revels content with this victory. More than a year later, in May, 1662, when Davenant opened his theatre in Portugal Row, he commenced an action against Betterton, the player, the result of which has not come down to us.

It might be reasonably supposed that this bringing the matter to an issue would have settled the interesting and oft-debated question as to the power of the Lord Chamberlain, but, as we have seen, the findings of the jury were contradictory, though that of the London jury, as being the more intelligent, might be fairly brought in aid of the Court side\*

\* A full account of Sir H. Herbert's contentious proceedings will be found in Malone's “Shakespeare.” That laborious and learned commentator has scarcely had sufficient justice done to his labours.

We shall now turn to Killigrew's fellow-patentee

The direction of Sir W Davenant marks, as is well known, a revolution in the stage\* In all the records, patents, and announcements of the time allusion is made, with a kind of emphasis, to his new device of "scenes," and to those other embellishments and attractions which the adoption of scenery almost naturally suggested As this change is intimately connected with the philosophy of the drama itself, it may be worth while considering for a few moments in what its importance lay, and how directly it affected the performances, the play-houses, and indeed the whole character of the drama, and the performers themselves

But there was a still more significant reform, of French origin, introduced, which must first be considered

One of the most interesting and oft-debated questions is, who was the first actress of the female parts? It is well known that prior to the Reformation the custom was that these should be performed by boys, to the sacrifice of the dramatic effect and propriety, and in many pieces, where male disguise is

\* His works are printed in folio, 1673, which contain seventeen dramatic pieces, besides his poems, and his portrait crowned with laurel The features seem to resemble the open countenance of Shakespeare, but the damaged nose gives an odd cast to the face "I shall not inquire how he became noseless, but give you a stale jest upon the occasion Sir William walking by Temple Bar, a fishmonger's boy, in watering his fish upon the stall, besprinkled the Laundress, who, snuffing loudly, complained of the abuse The master begged the knight's pardon, and was for chastising his servant with some expostulations as well as a cudgel "Zounds, sir," cried the boy, "it's very hard I must be corrected for my cleanliness, the gentleman blew his nose upon my fish, and I was washing it off, that's all" The jest pleased Sir William so well that he gave him a piece of money and went away highly delighted Since I have given you one old jest upon the nose of Sir Wilham, I will venture to throw in another As he was walking along the mews, an importunate beggar woman teased him for charity, with often repeating, "Heaven bless your eye-sight! God preserve your worship's eye-sight" "Why, what's the matter with my eye sight, woman?" replied Sir Wilham, "I find no defect there" "Ah, good sir, I wish you never may," returned the beggar, "for should your sight ever fail you, you must borrow a nose of your neighbour to hang your spectacles on" (*Chetwood*)

assumed by females, with the result of a bewildering confusion. In "As You Like It," for instance, the boy would first assume the heroine's character, and then be redguised as a boy. So much concession, moreover, is demanded from our times on the stage, and so much tribute paid to convention, that one more or less would make little difference. This custom of women performing had long obtained on the French stage, and at the Restoration was ordained by royal rescript, for the patent ran

"Whereas the women's parts in plays have hitherto been acted by men in habits of women, at which some have taken offence, we do permit and give leave from this time to come that all women's parts be acted by women"

The first time that this change was witnessed was in the performance of "Othello," the earliest representation of which was on December 8th, 1660. And we have a prologue by one "J. Jordan," which, he professes, was "written to introduce *the first woman* that came to act on the stage," adding that she was unmarried. Mrs Anne Marshall was the leading lady of the company a little after the date of the prologue, so it is presumed that she was intended. A claim, however, has been made for Mrs. Coleman, who took the part of Ianthe in Sir W Davenant's "Siege of Rhodes" in 1656. But as theatres were at this time under a ban, and this was a sort of opera or spectacle, the whole seems an unlicensed and irregular proceeding. On January 31st, 1661, we find Pepys at the theatre witnessing the "Beggar's Bush," which he first saw performed by men only, then by women. And here he adds, "the first time I ever saw women come upon the stage." On his next going, he saw Beaumont and Fletcher's "Scornful Lady" done by a woman, which, as he thought, added greatly to the effect. Unfortunately he does not give the names of the ladies, and though Mrs Anne Marshall performed in the

"Scornful Lady" a couple of years, she had not then joined By others it is maintained that Mrs. Sanders, afterwards Miss Betterton, had appeared in the "Siege of Rhodes" before the Restoration. The first officially recognised actress would seem to have been Mrs Margaret Hughes, who was in possession of the part of Desdemona and of a prologue spoken in that character. It would appear, therefore, that the original performers were too obscure to have their names recorded, though we have the dates and characters of the performances.

Up to this time it may be said that the primitive arrangement of the stage on which Shakespeare and his actors exhibited themselves, had endured. The original and no doubt true principle of a stage performance seemed to be that the players should represent the characters and carry out the story by dialogue, the power of the author and of the actor supplying all that was necessary. To this end, all that was wanted was that the players should be well seen and heard, raised upon a platform or stage. The audience saw a number of figures, among themselves as it were, going through a passage of every-day life. Scenery was not necessary, or their imagination supplied it. Indeed, it can be conceived that scenes of the highest dramatic action, such as that between Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, would be effective in a common room. In short, the play was the main element—the emotions, the characters, the humours—to set which off, the background was unimportant. Indeed, fanciful as may seem the statement, it may be doubted if the elaborate modern system of scenes, brilliant lighting, and glaring colours, supplies illusion more than did the old negative system of a suspended label describing the scene. Custom and education have familiarised us to the existing arrangement; but if a person who had never been inside a theatre were introduced for the

first time to one of our modern sumptuous spectacles, with its flat surfaces and high painting, its glittering Dutch metal, square holes in the floor, up which the characters ascend or descend, he would certainly conceive that some kaleidoscopic world was before him, but nothing that reproduced the world about him. That there is nothing delusive, or any more than what is convenient in these arrangements, may be fairly assumed. Neither is there any connection between artificial light and acting. Yet to many these might seem almost inseparable, and acting without lamps would entail the sacrifice of stage delusion. This goes to the root of the matter. There was as much dramatic enjoyment when the play began at four o'clock in broad daylight, and those who have witnessed the recent Ammergau performances, given at noon, have admitted with surprise that they were introduced to a new and higher class of delusion, beside which the greatest efforts of the moderns seemed a magic lantern effect. As painted scenes were ineffective in daylight, and their introduction involved a performance by artificial light, so the mere exhibition of characters and simple acting admitted of performance in the daytime. The new reform, therefore, with which the name of Davenant will always be associated, inevitably brought with it the playing by candle or lamp, and no one that follows the extraordinary development of scenery but must admit that these triumphs have been purchased at the expense of dramatic art, and that the latter has been on the whole overladen and overweighted by what was intended to set it off.

It is extraordinary that this department of the English stage should have long remained in so primitive and barbarous a state. It may have been, however, owing to the prevalence of a wholesome intellectual taste, fostered by the works of Shakespeare and Johnson, and a purer idea of the drama. It

was admitted that the Italian stage artists were superior to the French. Towards the end of the century, an English traveller and critic witnessed some displays of scenic effect in Italy, which showed an ingenuity and magnificence to which the English have scarcely reached in our day. This writer, who had seen and studied the theatres in France and Italy, notes that the dresses in the former country were richer, of gold and silver stuff, in Italy they were all "false, but of a peculiar design and elegance." This, it may be remarked, shows a truer knowledge of stage effect. The house, too, was finer, the opening of the stage loftier. "Indeed," he adds, "our painting, compared to theirs, is daubing. I find among their decorations statues of marble and alabaster, palaces, colonnades, galleries, and sketches of architecture, pieces of perspective that deceive the judgment as well as the eye; prospects of a prodigious extent in spaces not thirty foot deep. As for their machines, I can't think it in the power of human wit to carry their inventions farther. In 1697, I saw at Venice an elephant discovered on the stage, when, in an instant, that great machine disappeared and an army was seen in its place; the soldiers having, by the disposition of their shields, given so true a representation of it as if it had been a real elephant."

At the Theatre Capranic, in Rome, 1698, there was a ghost of a woman surrounded by guards. This phantom, extending her arms and unfolding her clothes, was, with one motion, transformed into a perfect palace, with its front, its wings, body, and courtyard! The guards, striking their halberts on the stage, were immediately turned into so many waterworks, cascades, and trees, that formed a charming garden before the palace! At the same theatre was given the interior of hell, in the opera of "Nerone Infante." Here part of the stage opened, and discovered a scene underneath representing several caves full of infernal spirits, that flew about,

discharging fire and smoke; on another side the river of Lethe and Charon's boat. Upon this landing a prodigious monster appeared, whose mouth opening, to the great horror of the spectators, covered the front wings of the remaining part of the stage. Within his jaws were discovered a throne of fire, and a multitude of monstrous snakes, on which Pluto sat. After this the great monster, expanding his wings, began to move very slowly towards the audience. Under his body appeared a great multitude of devils, who formed themselves into a ballet, and plunged one after the other into the opening of the floor. The great monster was in an instant transformed into an innumerable multitude of broad white butterflies, which flew all into the pit, and so low that some often touched the hats of several of the spectators, and at length disappeared. During this circumstance, which sufficiently employed the eyes of the spectators, the stage was refitted, and the scene changed into a beautiful garden, with which the third act began. Numbers of strangers came from a distance to see this \*

Bearing all this in mind, it becomes easy to understand the character of a performance, and also what kind of aspect a theatre presented before the introduction of scenery. The innovation, it will be seen, altered the whole character of the house. We have all the materials for reconstructing one of the older theatres as it stood in the days of Charles the First and Charles the Second. There is a curious picture of the interior of the Red Bull Theatre, as it appeared under the Commonwealth, and which was not likely to differ from the others. Boxes appear to have run round the entire house, even including the side now devoted to the stage. This latter was what its name actually imports, a stage projected well into the hall, a door, with curtains, underneath the boxes, leading off to the green-room. The actors were not, therefore,

\* "Comparison between French and Italian Music," 1709

in a picture-frame, as it were, but on a stand in the middle of the audience. Two lamps or branches hung at the back, while five little lamps, each with two flames, were placed on the platform, at its edge, doing duty as foot-lights \* The well-known Fortune Theatre, which stood in Golden Lane, and which was built in 1599, was actually standing not many years ago. It presented the appearance of one of those old framed houses overhanging the pathway, like the stern of an old argosy, with four small-paned windows in its long length, and a large presentment of the royal arms over the door. It was later formed into two tenements, Nos. 61 and 62. But only a couple of years ago there were to be also seen the remains of another old theatre in Playhouse Yard, in the same district, the old Blackfriars Theatre, let out in common lodgings. A visitor clearly distinguished the gallery in the strangely sloping floor, which had been altered and "converted" But the district has been in part cleared, streets widened, and the old theatre has shared in the general demolition.

We are thus well furnished on the whole with sketches of the old theatres. Mr. Collier quotes a list of contracts which the proprietor entered into for the construction of the Fortune, and as the measurements of the principal departments are given, it would not be difficult to draw an exact plan of it.† It consisted of three rows of boxes, with "gentlemen's rooms" and "twopenny rooms." These last, as they were to have seats, would seem to have the large spaces distinguished from the boxes, such as the pit and amphitheatre, and a little stipulation lays down that "the divisions" and other arrangements were to be the same as at "the Globe." As the stage

\* This curious picture is given in that scarce volume, "Kirkham's Drolls."

† The following are the dimensions outside wall, 80 feet  $\times$  80, interior ditto, 55  $\times$  55, stage, 43  $\times$  27, height, 32 feet

was to be forty-three feet wide by twenty-seven feet deep, it will be seen that its width was considerably less than that of the house, which shows that it was constructed after the pattern of the Red Bull, and intended to stretch into the body of the theatre as a platform \*

This simple arrangement naturally entailed structures that could be raised of the slightest pattern and materials, and at comparatively trifling cost. Even at the present time, buildings devoted to entertainments, depending exclusively on individual exertions, such as circuses, delineations, etc., need only be of a temporary kind. The modern theatre, on the contrary, actually requires enormous constructions above and below the stage, to the deformity of the whole, as may be seen in the recent instance of the New Opera House at Paris. The old houses were mainly run up of lath and plaster, with a tiled roof over the stage, known in theatrical argot as "the shadow." The cost, too, was comparatively slight. But in the Davenant era the new theatres were to be buildings, not "constructions," of a substantial kind, and it will be seen what a contrast the new theatres offered to the old Shakespearian temples.

It was natural that with these attractions Davenant and his company should draw all the company from the other house. "Hitherto," says a chronicler, "the audience saw nothing but some linsey-woolsey curtains, or, at the best, some pieces of old tapestry filled with awkward figures that would almost fright the audiences.†" Within six months the for-

\* Mr Collier seems to think that the six feet of space on each flank between the sides of the stage and the boxes were used as entrances for the audiences. But in the picture of the Red Bull interior this is seen to be filled with spectators. Mr Collier did not perceive, perhaps, that the stage was of the character that I have suggested.

† Gildon, "Life of Betterton." This curtain or tapestry "with the awkward figures" is to be seen in the picture of the Red Bull before alluded to.

tunate manager was enabled to double his prices,\* and indeed the privilege was so highly profitable that it was publicly stated that, under his sharing agreement with his company, Killigrew was drawing nearly 20*l.* a week, while Davenant was receiving as much as 200*l.* per week † The truth appears to be that the monopolists were virtually masters of the stage and of the players, and as no actor could appear or no piece be performed without their permission, they had merely to take possession of all the theatres on their own terms. Killigrew, therefore, kept the two houses of the Red Bull and Clare Market open,‡ while Davenant maintained the Cockpit, Salisbury Court, and later even a third house

The well-known "Clerk of the Acts" at the Admiralty is, unfortunately, the only diligent playgoer of the time who has thought it worth while to record what he saw at the various houses, and his little touchings give us glimpses of what went forward. Thus, on November 20th, 1660, he says

Mr Shepley and I to the new playhouse near Lincoln's Inn Fields (which was formerly Gibbon's tennis-court), where the play of "Beggar's Bush" was newly begun, and so we went in and saw it well acted and here I saw the first time one Moone, who is said to be the best actor in the world, lately come over with the King, and indeed it is the finest playhouse, I believe, that ever was in England. This morning I found my lord in bed late, he having been with the King, Queen, and Princess, at the Cockpit all night, where General Monk treated them; and after supper a play, where the King did put a great affront upon Singleton's musique, he bidding them stop and made the French musique play, which, my lord says, do much outdo all ours.

\* Pepys, December 16th, 1661-62

† Sir H. Herbert's petition in Malone. He only says that he is "credibly informed" of these facts. There is, no doubt, manifest exaggeration in the amount of the sums

‡ Downes' "Account," p. 36

This Michael Mohun was naturally in favour, having been a major in the King's army during the wars, and having fought gallantly. And this furnishes a hint of the position of stage-players at this time, and shows that it must have been one of credit, something akin to that of a retired officer of our time, who has taken up the breeding of horses for racing purposes, or gains his livelihood in trade.

On January 3rd in the next year Mr. Pepys was at "the theatre," which was, in fact, the Theatre Royal, Clare Market, "where was acted 'Beggar's Bush,' it being very well done; and here the first time that ever I saw women come upon the stage." When he went to the Cockpit in April, 1661, he was not very well contented with the piece, which was not "very well done." "But my pleasure was great to see the manner of it and so many great beauties, but above all Mrs. Palmer, in whom the King do discover a great deal of familiarity" Indeed, the royal patron was assiduous in his attendance Three days later he saw one of the famous lady-players of the old dispensation in "The Silent Woman" "Kinaston the boy had the good turn to appear in three shapes \* first, as a poor woman in ordinary clothes, to please Morose, then in fine clothes, as a gallant, and in them was clearly the prettiest woman in the whole house, and lastly, as a man, and then likewise did appear the handsomest man in the house."

This change of men taking men's parts only had been enforced by royal authority, being made a condition of the new monopoly, but the pretence of morality so ostentatiously put forward leads us to suspect, that it was not the interests of dramatic propriety so much as the advancement of the King's pastimes that was in view He and his courtiers had witnessed abroad the performance of females on the stage,

\* This word still belongs to the green-room.

and the irregularities that followed their introduction on the English, almost within a few weeks, make it highly probable that the whole was calculated with some such view

Then Mr. Pepys occasionally visited the rival house in Salisbury Court, which appears to have had the best company and acting “But above all that I ever saw,” he said after witnessing “The Bondman,” “Betterton do the Bondman the best” On the 11th he was at the theatre again, saw “Love’s Mistress” “done by them, which I do not like in some things as well as their acting in Salisbury Court” It was not difficult to trace the cause of this inferiority—the players reflected the lazy manners of their director, who was likely to have been complaisant enough to his master’s humours, and, indeed, it was noticed that the players were beginning to exhibit much vanity and pride, owing, it was believed, to their wealth and sense of consequence.

Davenant, on the contrary, seems to have directed his enterprise respectably and with conscientious spirit. But he had determined on a new attraction which was certain to draw the town. He was no doubt suffering from the patronage bestowed on the rival house, where the actors were growing wealthy. He determined to revive the old operatic interlude, a sort of pageant which was to captivate the eye and ear, chiefly by music and scenery. Salisbury Court was probably inconvenient and out of the way, so he procured a new theatre situated in Lincoln’s Inn, and close to the rival house. It stood in Portugal Row, at the back of the present hospital. It would, therefore, have hardly been more than a hundred yards away from the royal house. On June 25th or 26th, 1661, he opened his new house with “The Siege of Rhodes,” set off with scenery, “decorations” of the stage, and other effects The success was decided. Mr. Pepys, who was there, was loud in his praises. “We staid a very great

while for the King and Queen of Bohemia. And by the breaking of a board over our heads, we had a great deal of dust fell into the ladies' necks and the men's hair, which made good sport. The King being come, the scene opened, which, indeed, is very fine and magnificent, and well acted, all but the Eunuche, who was so much out that he was hissed off the stage." This attraction began to injure the other house, and two nights later the same amateur found it "strange to see this house, that used to be so thronged, now empty since the opera begun, and so will continue for a while, I believe."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TWO PATENTS.

COMPETITION stimulated the lively Killigrew, who had found his comparatively mean house in Clare Market quite unsuited to the spectacular aims of the new drama, and determined on erecting a new and suitable playhouse. The first step was to secure a site, which he determined should be in Drury Lane. A piece of ground at the top of the street, and known as the "Riding Yard," which was one hundred and twelve feet in length by fifty-nine in breadth, could be secured, and a treaty was accordingly entered into with the Earl of Bedford, the landlord, to take it on a lease for forty-one years from Christmas, at a rent of 50*l*. The lessee of the other house was not behindhand. He also obtained leave to commence a new theatre. Thus, even with patents and monopolies, the restless spirit of competition could not be laid. To enable him to carry out this project, he now received a new patent, a most important step; a similar one was granted to the other company. These important documents, which for one hundred and fifty years were to control the stage, I shall now give at length.

## DAVENANT'S PATENT.

*To Sir W Davenant.*

1662 15 Jan. 14 Car. II.

Recites former patents 14 Car. Art 39. To Sir W. Davenant.

Whereas Our Royal Father of glorious memory, by his letters under his great seal of England, and bearing date at Westminster the 26 day of March, in the 14 year of his reign, did give and grant unto Sir W Davenant (by the name of William Davenant, gent., his heirs, execs, and assigns) full power, licence, and authority that he, they, and every of them, by him and themselves, and by all and every such person and persons as he or they should depute or appoint, and his and their labourers, servants, and workmen should, and might, lawfully, quietly, and peaceably frame, erect, new build, and set up upon a paice of ground lying near unto or behind the Three Kings ordinary in Fleet St, in the parishes of St. Dunstan's in the West, London, or in St Bride's, London; or in either of them, or in any other ground in or about that place, or in the whole street aforesaid, then allotted to him for that use, or in any other place that was or thereafter should be assigned or allotted out to the said Sir W Davenant, by Thomas, Earl of Arundel and Surrey, then Earl Marshall of England, or any other commissioner for building, for the time being in their behalf, a theatre or playhouse, with necessary tiring and retiring rooms, and other places convenient, *containing in the whole forty yards square at the most*, wherein plays, musical entertainments, scenes, or other the like presentments might be presented And our said Royal Father did grant unto the said Sir W. Davenant, his heirs, etc , that it shd. and might be lawful to and for him the said Sir W. Davenant, his heirs, etc , from time to time to gather together, entertain, govern, priviledge, and keep, such and so many players and persons to exercise actions, musical presentments, scenes, dancing, and the like, as he the said Sir W Davenant, his heirs, etc , should think fit and approve for the said house, and such persons to permit and continue at and during the pleasure of the said Sir W. Davenant, his heirs, and from time to time to act plays in such house, to be by him or them erected, and

exercise music, musical presentments, scenes, dancing, or other the like at the same or other houses at times or after plays are ended, peaceably and quietly without impeachment or impediment of any person or persons whatsoever, for the honest recreation of such as should desire to see the same, and that it should and might be lawful to and for the said Sir W Davenant, his heirs, etc , to take and receive of such as should resort to see or hear any such plays, scenes, and entertainments whatsoever such sum or sums of money as was or thereafter from time to time should be accustomed to be given or taken in other playhouses and places for the like scenes, plays, presentments, and entertainments as in and by the said letters patents, relation being thereunto had, more at large may appear

And whereas we did by our letters patent, under the Great Seal of England bearing date 16 May, in the 13 year of our reign, exemplifie the said recited letters patent granted by our Royal Father, etc

And whereas the said Sir W. Davenant hath surrendered our letters patent of exemplification, and also the said recited letters patent granted by our Royal Father, into our Court of Chancery to be cancelled, which surrender we have accepted, and do accept, by these presents. Know ye that we of our especial grace, certain knowledge, and meer motion, and upon the humble petition of the said Sir W. Davenant, and in consideration of the good and faithful service which he the said Sir W. Davenant hath done unto us, and doth intend to do for the future, and in consideration of the said surrender, have given and granted, and by these presents for us, our heirs and successors, do give and grant unto the said Sir W. Davenant, his heirs, etc., full power, licence, and authority that he, they, and every one of them, by him and themselves, and by all and every such person and persons as he or they should depute and appoint, and his or their labourers, servants, and workmen, shall and may lawfully, peaceably, and quietly frame, erect, new build, and set up in any place within our cities of London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof, where he or they shall find best accommodation for that purpose, to be assigned and allotted out by the surveyor of our works, one theatre or playhouse, with necessary tiring and retiring rooms,

and other places convenient and of such extent and dimensions as he the said Sir W Davenant, his heirs, etc , shall think fitting, wherein tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, music, scenes, and all other entertainments of the stage whatsoever may be showed and presented, and we do hereby for us, our heirs and successors, grant unto the said Sir W Davenant, his heirs, etc , full power, licence, and authority to gather together, entertain, govein, priviledge, and keep such and so many players and persons to exercise and act tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, and other performances of the stage, within the house to be built as aforesaid, or within the house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, wherein the said Sir W Davenant doth now exercise the premises, or within any other house where he or they can best be fitted for that purpose within our cities of London and Westminster, or the subuils thereof, which said company shall be the servants of our dearly-beloved brother, James, Duke of York, and shall consist of such number as the said Sir W. Davenant, his heirs and assigns, shall from time to time think meet And such persons to permit and continue at and during the pleasures of the said Sir W. Davenant, his heirs, etc , from time to time to act plays and entertainments of the stage of all sorts, peaceably and quietly, without the impeachment or impediment of any person or persons whatsoever, for the honest recreation of such as shall desire to see the same And it shall and may be lawful to and for the said Sir W Davenant, his heirs, etc , to take and receive of such our subjects as shall resort to see or hear any such plays, scenes, and entertainments whatsoever, such sum or sums of money as either have accustomedly been given and taken in the like kind, or as shall be thought reasonable by him or them, in regard of the great expence of scenes, music, and such new decorations as have not formerly been used.

And further, for us, our heirs and successors, we do hereby give and grant unto the said Sir W Davenant, his heirs, etc., full power to make such allowances out of that which he shall soe receive by the acting of plays and entertainments of the stage as aforesaid, to the actors and other persons employed in acting, representing, or in any quality whatsoever, about the said theatre, as he or they shall think fit , that the said company shall be under the sole government and authority of the said

Sir W. Davenant, his heirs, etc ; and all scandalous and mutinous persons shall from time to time be ejected, and disabled from playing in the said theatre.

And for that we are informed that divers companies of players have taken upon them to act plays publicly in our cities of London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof, without any authority for that purpose, we do hereby declare our dislike of the same, and will and grant that only the said company erected and set up, or to be erected and set up, by the said Sir W Davenant, his heirs, etc , by virtue of these presents, and one other company erected and set up, or to be erected and set up, by Thomas Killigrew, Esq , his heirs or assigns, and none other, shall from henceforth act or represent comedies, tragedies, plays, or entertainments of the stage, within our said cities of London and Westminster or the suburbs thereof, which said company to be erected by the said Thomas Killigrew, his heirs or assigns, shall be subject to his and their government and authority, and shall be styled the Company of Us and our Royal Consort And to preserve amity and correspondence betwixt the said companies, and that the one may not encroach upon the other by any indirect means, we will and ordain that no actor or other person employed about either of the said theatres ejected by the said Sir W Davenant and Thomas Killigrew, or either of them, or deserting his company, shall be received by the governor or any of the said other company, or any other person or persons to be employed in acting, or in any matter relating to the stage, without the consent and approbation of the governor of the company, whereof the said person so ejected or deserting was a member, signified under his hand and seal And we do by these presents declare all other company and companies saving the companies before mentioned, to be silenced and suppressed.

And forasmuch as many plays formerly acted do contain several profane, obscene, and scurrilous passages, and the women parts therein have been acted by men in the habits of women, at which some have taken offence, for the preventing of these abuses for the future we do strictly charge, command, and enjoin that from henceforth no new play shall be acted by either of the said companies containing

any passages offensive to piety and good manners, nor any old or revived play containing any such offensive passages as aforesaid, until the same shall be corrected and purged by the said masters or governors of the said respective companies from all such offensive and scandalous passages as aforesaid. And we do likewise permit and give leave that all the women's parts to be acted in either of the said two companies from this time to come may be performed by women, so long as these recreations, which by reason of the abuses aforesaid were scandalous and offensive, may by such reformation be esteemed not only harmless delights, but useful and instructive representations of human life, by such of our good subjects as shall resort to see the same

And these our letters patents, or the inrollmt thereof, shall be in all things good and effectual in the law, according to the true intent and meaning of the same Anything in these presents contained, or any law, statute, act, ordinance, proclamation, provision, restriction, or any other matter, cause, or thing whatsoever to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding Although express mention of the true yearly value or certainty of the premises, or of any of them, or of any other gifts or grants by us or by any of our predecessors heretofore made to the said Sir W Davenant in these presents is not made, or any other statute, act, ordinance, provision, proclamation, or restriction heretofore had, made, enacted, ordained, or provided, or any other matter, cause, or thing whatsoever to the contrary thereof in any wise notwithstanding In witness hereof we have caused these our letters to be made Patents. Witness ourself at Westminster, the 15th day of January, in the 14th year of our reign

By the King.

(Seal)

HOWARD.

KILLIGREW'S PATENT.

Charles the Second, by the Grace of God, King of England, Scotland, Fiance, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, etc. To all whom theis present shall come, greeting: Know ye that wee of our especial grace, certain knowledge, and mere

mo<sup>c</sup>on, and upon the humble peti<sup>c</sup>on of our trustie and well-beloved Thomas Killigrew, Esquire, one of the groomes of our bedchamber, have given and granted, and by theis present, for us, our heires, and successors, doe give and grante to the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires, and assignes, full power, licence, and authoritie, that he, they, and every of them, by him and themselves, and by all and every such person and persons as he or they shall depute or appointe, and his and their labourers, servant, and workmen, shall and mae lawfullie, quietly and peaceably fiane, erect, new build, and sett up in any place within our citties of London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof, where he or they shall finde best accommoda<sup>c</sup>n for that purpose, to be assigned and allotted out by the surveyor of our workes one theatre or playhouse, with necessarie tyreing and retyreng rooms and other places convenient, of such extent and dimension as the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires or assignes shall think fittinge, wherein tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, musick, scenes, and all other entertainment of the stage whatsoever may be shonen and presented. And wee doe hereby for us, our heires and successors, graunt unto the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires and assignes, full power, licence, and authoritie, from time to time to gather together, entertaine, governe, priviledge, and keep such and soe manie players and persons to exercise and act tragedies, comedies, playes, operas, and other performa<sup>c</sup>ones of the stage within the house to be built as aforesaid, or within any other house where he or they cann be best fitted for that purpose, within our cities of London and Westminster or the suburbs thereof, which said company shall be the servant of us and our deare consort, and shall consist of such number as the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires or assignes, shall from time to time thunke meete; and such persons to permitt and continue att and dureigne the pleasure of the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires or assignes from time to time to act playes and enterteynement of the stage of all sort *peaceably and quietly without the impeachment or impediment of any person or persons WHATSOEVER*, for the honest recrea<sup>c</sup>on of such as shall desire to see the same. and that it shall and mae be lawful to and for the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires and assignes, to take and receive of such our subject as shall resort to see or heare anie such playes, scenes, and entertainment whatsoever, such

some or somes of money as either have accustomable bin given or taken in the like kinde, or as shall be thought reasonable by him or them in regard of the greate expences of scenes, musick, and such new decorations as have not been formerly used, and further, for us, our heires and successors, wee do hereby give and grant unto the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires and assignes, full power to make such allowances out of that which he shall soe receive by the acting of playes and entertainment of the stage as aforesaid to the actois and other persons employed in actinge, representinge or in any qualitie whatsoever about the said theatre, as he or they shall thinke fitt, and that the said companie shall be under the sole government and authorite of the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires and assignes, and all scandalous and mutinous persons from time to time by him and them to be ejected and disabled from playeing in the said theatre. And for that we are informed that divers companies of players have taken upon them to act playes publiquely in our said citties of London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof, without any authoritie for that purpose, wee doe hereby declare our dislike of the same, and will and graunt that onely the said compaine to be erected and sett upp by the said Thomas Killigrew, his heires and assignes by virtue of theis present, and one other companie to be erected and sett up by Sir Wilham Davenant, knight, his heires or assignes and none other, shall from henceforth act or represent comedies, tragedies, plaies, or entertainment of the stage within our said cities of London and Westminster and the suburbs thereof, which said companie to be erected by the said William Davenant his heires or assignes shall be subject to his or their government and authoritie, and shall be styled the Duke of York's companie, and the better to preserve amitye and correspondence betwixt the said companies, and that the one maie not encroach upon the other by any indirect meanes, wee will and ordaine that noe actor or other person employed about either the said theatres ejected by the said Thomas Killigrew and Sir William Davenant or either of them, or deserting his companie, shall be received by the governor of the said other companie to be employed in acting or in any manner relatinge to the stage without the consent or approbation of the governor of the companie whereof the person so ejected or deserting was a member, signified under

his hand and seale; and wee doe by theis present declare all other companie and companies before mentioned to be silenced and suppressed, and for as much as many playes formerly acted doe conteine severall prophane, obscene, and scurrulous passages, and the women's part therein have byn acted by men in the habit of women, at which some have taken offence, for the preventing of these abuses for the future, wee doe hereby strictly comande and enjoyn, that from henceforthe noe new play shall be acted by either of the said companies conteyninge anie passages offensive to pietie and good manners, nor any old or revived play conteyning any such offensive passages as aforesaid, untill the same shall be corrected and purged by the said masters or governours of the said respective companies from all such offensive and scandalous passages as aforesaid. And wee doe likewise permit and give leave, that all the woemen's part to be acted in either of the said two companies for the time to come may be performed by woemen soe long as their recreac̄ones, which by reason of the abuses aforesaid were scandalous and offensive, may by such reformation be esteemed not onely harmless delight, but useful and instructive representac̄ions of humane life, to such of our good subject as shall resort to the same, and theis our letters patent, or the inrollment thereof shall be in all things firme, good, effectuall in the lawe, according to the true intent and meaning of the same, anything in theis present contained, or any lawe, statute, ordinance, proclamaçon, provision, or restriçon, or any other matter, cause, or thing whatsoever to the contrary in anywise notwithstanding although express mençon of the true yearlye value or certenity of the premises, or of any of them, or of any other guift or grant by us or by any of our progenitores or predecessors heretofore made to the said Thomas Kilhgrew, and the said Sir William Davenant in theis present is not made, or any statute, ordinance, provision, proclamaçon or restriçon heretofore had, made, enacted, ordeyned or provided, or any other matter, cause, or thing whatsoever to the contrary thereof in anywise notwithstanding. In witness whereof wee have caused theis our letters to be made patent Witness our selfe at Westminster, the 25th day of April, in the 14th yeare of our reigne

By the King.

(Seal)

HOWARD.

The signal being thus given for that costly competition between the rival houses which was to be inflamed year by year down to recent times, the manager, Killigrew, of the other house had no option but to enter on the struggle. An intelligent critic, before the century closed, traced the decay of dramatic art to this source. "Then," he says sensibly enough, "they could draw without scenes or machines, now, with all that show, can hardly draw an audience" \* Before the Restoration, the nobles, attracted by the pure love of art, were contented with the pit, now must have boxes, and the general spaciousness and luxury of accommodation made the playhouse the scene of diversions other than dramatic, and anticipated the "saloon" days of modern Drury Lane. The manager, however, had not sufficient confidence in his own resources to engage in such an undertaking without assistance, and he engaged a partner to share the responsibility. This was Sir Robert Howard, a well-known theatrical character, and a successful dramatist. This gentleman joined in the speculation, but after the arrangement was concluded, the two adventurers thought it advisable to share the risk with the company of actors who were to play there, and, indeed, considering that by the terms of the contract the new theatre was to cost no less a sum than 1500*l*, which would seem to be about three times as much as had been hitherto paid for the creation of a new playhouse, they might naturally wish to secure themselves from loss. Accordingly, on the 28th of January in the following year, the actors of the Clare Market company, comprising Hart, Major Mohun, Burt, Lacy, Shatterell, Clunn, Cartwright, and Wintersall, agreed to take half the risk and profits—Lacy alone taking four shares—while Killigrew and Howard took half † They were not

\* Wright, "Historia Histrionica," 1699.

† The original lease of the ground, or at least a portion of the ground of the present Drury Lane Theatre, is as follows. "December 20, 1661.—Indre of lease from the Earle of Bedford to Sr Robert Howard, Thomas Killigrew, Charles

merely responsible for the rent, but were committed to the theatre, as they are spoken of in the deeds as "the builders" On the same day another arrangement was made between the

Hart, Theophilus Burt, Michael Mohun, Nicholas Burt, John Lacy, Robert Shatterell, Walter Clunn, William Cartwright, William Wintersall, William Hewitt, Robert Clayton The said Earle of Bedford, in consideracon of the rente, etc , and in consideracon that Sr Robert Howard, Thomas Killigrew, and the rest, except Hewitt and Clayton, should before Christmas, 1662, expend and lay out 1500l in building a playhouse vpon the peice or parcell of ground scituata in Pach Set Martin's in the Ffeilds and St Paule, Covent Garden, knowne by the name of the Ridesing Yaid, containing in length from east to west 112 foot, and in breadth from north to south att the east end 59 ffoot, and at the west end 58 ffoot Did att the noiacon and appointment of Sr Robert Howard, Killigrew, etc , demise to Hewitt and Clayton the said peice of ground for the terme of 41 yeas from Xmas then next att the rent of 50l, in trust for Howard, Killigrew, etc And Howard, Killigrew, and all the rest except Hewitt and Clayton covenant to pay the 50l rent "

" January 28, 1662 —Indie of 11 parts from William Hewitt and Robert Clayton of the 1st part, Sr Robert Howard of the 2nd part, Thomas Killigrew of the 3rd part, Charles Hart of the 4th part, Michael Mohun of the 5th part, Nicholas Burt of the 6th part, John Lacy of the 7th part, Robert Shatterell of the 8th part, Walter Clunn of the 9th part, William Cartwright of the 10th part, and William Wintersall of the 11th part, reciting the Earle of Bedford's lease The said William Hewitt and Robert Clayton in performance of the trust in them reposedit bargaine, sell, assigne, and sell over vnto the said Sr Robert Howard, Thomas Killigrew, Charles Hart, Michael Mohun, etc , the peice or parcoll of ground in St Martin's in the Ffeilds and St Paul's, Covent Garden, then called Ridesing Yaid, to hold the said 9 parts thereof (the whole being divided into 36 parts) vnto the said Sr Robert Howard, his execrs etc , from thenceforth for the residue of the terme of 41 yeares in and by the said Earle of Bedford's lease then to come and vniexpired And to have and to hold 9 other parts thereof (the whole in 36 pts to be divided) vnto the said Thomas Killigrew, his execrs etc , from thenceforth for and durieng the residue of the sd terme of 41 years And to have and to hold two other pts thereof (the whole being divided as aforesd ) vnto the said Charles Hart, his execrs etc , for the residue of the said terme of 41 years And to have and to hold two other parts thereof (the whole being divided as aforesaid) vnto the said Michael Mohun, his execrs etc , for the residue of the said terme of 41 years And to have and to hold 4 other parts thereof vnto the sd John Lacy, his execrs etc And to have and to hold 2 other parts thereof vnto the said Robert Shatterell, his execrs etc And to have and to hold 2 pts thereof vnto the said Walter Clunn, his execrs etc And two other pts thereof vnto the said William Cartwright, his execrs And to hold two other pts vnto the said William Wintersall, his execrs etc , for the remain of the sd terme of 41 years, etc , with this piovisse therem That if any of the plyes therein should not pay his or theire respective proporcion of the sd rents reserved vpon the sd rented lease, then the share of him or them making such fayler should be forfeited "

managers and these actors, together with some other members of the company who had not taken shares in the venture, viz. Baxter, Kynaston, and Loveday, binding themselves to act at that theatre only and nowhere else that the whole company should pay the builders a daily rent of 3*l.* 10*s.* for the use of the theatre, which, of course, in the case of Mohun and the other adventureis, would be charged against their share of the profits. Such was this joint-stock speculation, which was businesslike and placed on a very solid foundation; such was the inauguration of the great establishment at the top of Drury Lane.

Having started with these modest professions, it was soon seen that Mr Thomas Killigrew was not altogether sincere in his programme. No artists could have offered less of the dramatic "legitimacy" than those with which he now attempted to compete with the rival houses. While he was producing one dazzling show after the other—"Psyche," "The Tempest"—all set off with delicious music and beautiful scenery and "machines," the latter indispensable to an opera,\* in a rather undignified spirit he seems to have thought that common ridicule would help his purpose, and he accordingly employed a "hack writer" named Duffet to parody the Shakespearean operas of Davenant. Farcical pieces, not unlike the burlesques of our modern theatres, were brought out—a "Mock

\* Dryden defines an opera to be "a poetical tale or picture, represented by vocal and instrumental music, and adorned with scenes, *machines*, and dances." The effect of "wind music" at the theatre is characteristically described by Pepys. "But that which did please me beyond anything in the who'e world, was the wind musique when the angel comes down, which is so sweet that it ravished me, and indeed, in a word, did wrap up my soul so that it made me really sick, just as I have formerly been when in love with my wife, that neither then, nor all the evening going home, and at home, I was able to think of anything, but remained all night transported, so as I could not believe that ever any musique hath that real command over the soul of a man as this did upon me, and makes me resolve to practise wind musique, and to make my wife do the like."

"Tempest" in particular, in which occurred this doggerel for Ariel

Where good ale is there suck I,  
In a cobbler's stall I lie  
While the watch is passing by,  
Then about the streets I fly.

Nor had Mr Killigrew been disinclined to compete in the matter of scenes and decorations with his rivals. There was a stage mimic and buffooning comedian, whose gifts seem to have been of the kind with which circus clowns entertain their patrons—the facetious Jo Haines, who had been in foreign countries, having been taken abroad by the Duke of Buckingham in his carriage as a travelling jester. It occurred to Mr Killigrew that this personage, who had been behind the scenes in the French theatres, would be a suitable agent to despatch abroad for the purpose of noting the various devices of the foreign theatres. His companion was Hart, director and scene-keeper of the theatre, to whom he was to act as interpreter, but his own function was supposed to be of a more important kind, "as one whose interest was well established with the engineers and undertakers of the operas, that through his means he"—that is Hart—"might prye into the whole design and contrivance of them"\*. It may be conceived that this "joker" was of little use, and after making of his journey a pleasant piece of buffoonery, "he returned to the playhouse," we are told, "with just as much knowledge of the opera and machines at Paris as if he had been all the time in Holland."

It is curious to note how the rivals took exactly the same steps, for Killigrew was only imitating Davenant, who, as we

\* "Life of Jo Haines." The reader will note these curious theatrical terms—undertakers, engineers, and also adventurers.

have seen, had in the preceding months entered into a contract with his actors which was of a far more advantageous nature It was settled there were to be fifteen shares divided, according to the following proportions The manager was to have two, “towards house rent, *building, scaffolding, and making of frames for scenes*, as well as an additional share for expense of scenes, properties, and dresses.” It will be seen to what a forward and elaborate pitch the economy of the stage had already reached, and what an antiquity that word “properties” enjoys. This, however, was merely a contribution to the necessary expenses of the house. There remained the other twelve shares, of which the director claimed seven, on the following ground . “To pay women who act, also for his trouble for erecting them all into a company, and his other expenses for many years ” The other five shares the performers were to divide among them If he seemed to engross the lion’s share of the profits, he took on himself all the expenses, so the actors had their portion free from any claim

This agreement furnishes some other curious details The admission was to be by “ballatine”—or tickets each bearing a seal—“for all doors and boxes.” The manager was to provide three persons, who were to sell the tickets in a room adjoining the theatre, while the actors were to appoint a person who was to survey the money received. Davenant stipulated for the appointment of half the doorkeepers, as well as that of wardrobe-keeper, and that important officer the barber He was to furnish all the dresses, but no hats, feathers, gloves, ribbons, sword-belts, bands, stockings, shoes—unless such were to be “a propertie,” that is, belong to the wardrobe of the house Thus commemorative are the traditions, for some such rule, extending to most of the articles enumerated, obtains on the modern stage to this day. Finally, Mr. Killigrew, the co-patentee, was to have his private box, of a size to hold six

persons, and any friend he sent with an order was to be admitted. Such was this agreement, which reads like a contract between a manager of our day and his company, and shows, as we have seen, how rapidly the new organisation had advanced.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE NEW THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE

IT does not appear that the work of building the new theatre was at once taken in hand, for more than two years elapsed before it was opened. It was "a small and rude structure," Mr Peter Cunningham says—it would seem without authority, for its dimensions were larger than those of any previously attempted, and Mr Pepys, "who walked up and down" before it some two months before the opening, was greatly struck with it, thinking it "would be very fine." The opening-day was April 8th, 1663, and the following was the bill

By His Majesty's Company of Comedians

At the New Theatre in Drury Lane

This day being Thursday April 8 1663 will be acted

A Comedy called

### THE HUMOROUS LIEUTENANT

The King - - - - - Mr Wintershal

Demetrius - - - - - Mr. Hart

Selevers - - - - - Mr. Burt

Leontius - - - - - Major Mohun

Lieutenant - - - - - Mr Clun

Celæ - - - - - Mrs. Marshall

*The play will begin at three o'clock exactly*

Boxes, 4s.; Pit, 2s. 6d., Middle Gallery, 1s. 6d., Upper  
Gallery, 1s.

The grand entrance was in Little Russell Street, not, as now, in Brydges Street. The stage was covered in by a tiled roof, and projected far into the pit in the manner that we have seen, so as to form lanes between it and the boxes on each side, which were also under cover, but the pit was at first open to the sky, though later covered in with a glazed cupola.\* The stage was lit with thick wax candles in brass cressets.

The little programme, which reads like a bill of our day in all save the simplicity of its announcements, furnishes material for a picture of the stage at this period. The performance, as we see, was "by His Majesty's Company of Comedians," a change from their old title of "King's Players," which they had borne up to the time of the patent. They were now an important, petted, and influential body, directed by gentlemen of the Court, familiar with kings and princes and persons of condition. Some ten of them—those whose names are found in the contract with Killigrew, actually belonged to the royal household, and in the warrants given them by the Lord Chamberlain they are styled gentlemen of the great chamber. They were allowed each ten yards of scarlet cloth, with a proper quantity of gold lace, "for liveries," adds Cibber, but this could not be supposed to refer to a servant's dress—which an officer in the army such as Major Mohun was would hardly degrade himself by assuming—but to the dress which "gentlemen on the household establishment" would have been

\* Cunningham's "Story of Nell Gwyn." It must have been covered in within five years of the opening, as is evidenced by this little description of the getting away from the theatre in February, 1668. "The play being done," says Mr. Pepys, "I into the pit to look for my wife, it being dark and raining, but could not find her, and so stand going between the two doors and through the pit an hour and half, I think, after the play was done, the people staying there till the rain was over, and to talk one with another. And among the rest here was the Duke of Buckingham to day openly sat in the pit." In 1662 we find the inconvenience to the audience of this want of protection, for "before the play was done, it fell such a storm of hayle, that we in the middle of the pit were fain to rise, and all the house in a disorder."

allowed. It is not clear that the like appointments were extended to the other company, but, says the same authority, "they were both in high estimation with the public, and so much the delight and concern of the Court, that they were not only supported by its being frequently present at its public presentations, but by its taking cognisance even of their private government, inasmuch that their particular differences, pretensions, or complaints were generally ended by the King's or Duke's personal command or decision" \* No wonder, then, that they waxed insolent, or that Mr Pepys noticed that "the gallants do begin to be tired with the vanity and pride of the theatre actors, who are indeed grown proud and rich" † But on this night of the opening of the first regular Drury Lane playhouse, we may enter with the crowd and see what kind of show the interior of a theatre in the days of Charles the Second presented

Between two and three o'clock in the afternoon the carriages and chairs of the audience were crowding into Brydges Street and Drury Lane, the play being announced to commence at thiee o'clock To many it will seem that a play at this hour would be robbed of half its romance and illusion. But this is only the result of habit and associations Even now the London public is being accustomed to morning performances at the same hour Under the old arrangement there was besides a different order for the day, and not that prevailing encroachment on the night which, after the day's work, has been found the only season for leisure and amusement But it is remarkable that, where dramatic entertainment in its purest sense was in vogue, it became indifferent at what hour it was presented, the sense of interest being so absorbing ; whereas, when it became overlaid with meretricious adorments, the season of night seemed more appropriate

\* Cibber's "Apology," c iv

† "Diary," February 23rd, 1661

The prices, as we see, were 4*s* to the boxes, 2*s* 6*d*, 1*s* 6*d*, and 1*s.* to the galleries. This seems a high price for the lower places, after making allowance for the relative difference of money value, as a seat in the cheapest gallery would have cost about 3*s* at present prices. Ladies sat in the pit, as Pepys shows, which would have been about the price of our stalls, say 7*s*. Mr. Pepys complains bitterly of this increase in the cost of playgoing—what would he say now to the menaced guinea per stall?—declaring that when he used to treat himself to the play he went always to the shilling place, and then was obliged to go to the eighteenpenny place, and “he strained hard,” he says, to manage this, yet only four years after the new patent theatres were opened he was astonished to find that even the ‘prentices and the “mean people” contrived to pay their shillings for the pit \* It may have been that these charges were for seats, and that there was a sort of area at the back of the pit, just as there is now in the Italian theatres, where people stood “So I to the other two playhouses into the pit to gaze up and down, and there did by this means *see for nothing* an act in the ‘Schoole of Compliments,’ at the Duke of York’s House, and ‘Henry the Fourth,’ at the King’s House”† It seems difficult at first sight to understand this, and we might be inclined to think that those who were content to stand during the performance were not charged. But an order of the Privy Council, dated February 27th, 1665, makes it intelligible. It was required that “all persons attending the Royal Theatre pay at the first door their money, to be returned if they leave before the end of the act, *complaint having been made that they refuse*, whereupon the doorkkeepers have to send after and solicit them for their

\* He is careful to record as an event of magnitude the first time he ever sat in a box

† Pepys’ “Diary,” January 7th, 1668

entrance-money the names of the offenders are to be reported to the Chamberlain."

Mr. Pepys may have been one of those who had "refused," and after whom it was probable the doorkeepers had to send. Or, what is more probable, he had visited each house, and, going away before the end of the act, had received back his money, and thus heard a portion of each piece for nothing \* Indeed, before the building of the new houses, when the theatre was a pastime for the Court, any one of influence seems to have had free admission, and the Admiralty Clerk chronicles with satisfaction how "by the favour of Mr Bowman," or of Mr Creed, who was high in his own office, he had often been brought in Once, indeed, his eagerness for seeing the play thus gratuitously led him into a rather surreptitious mode of obtaining admittance "At night, hearing that there was a play at the Cockpit (and my Lord Sandwich, who came to town last night, at it), I do go thither, and by very great fortune did follow four or five gentlemen who were carried to a little private door in the wall, and so crept through a narrow place and come into one of the boxes next the King's, but so as I could not see the King or Queen, but many of the fine ladies, who yet are not really so handsome generally as I used to take them to be, but that they are finely dressed. The company that came in with me into the box were all Frenchmen that could speak no English, but Lord ! what sport they made to ask a pretty lady that they had got among them that understood both French and English, to make her tell them what the actors said "† But it is curious, once the playhouse was formally constituted, how rapidly it fell into the routine of arrangement that scarcely differs in our own

\* We shall later see more of this curious arrangement

† "Diary," October, 1662 Mention is also made of "a balcony box and of the King's box"

day. Thus the account of the production of an exciting novelty three or four years after the opening, reads like that of a modern opening-night. The doors were besieged two hours before the opening, and on admission after the long wait, the house is mysteriously found to be half filled. But Mr. Pepys shall tell it.

It being almost twelve o'clock, or little more, to the King's playhouse, where the doors were not then open, but presently they did open, and we in, and find many people already come in by private ways into the pit, it being the first day of Sir Charles Sedley's new play so long expected, "The Mulberry Garden," of whom, being so reputed a wit, all the world do expect great matters. I having sat here awhile and eat nothing to-day, did slip out, getting a boy to keep my place, and to the Rose Tavern, and there got half a breast of mutton off of the spit and dined all alone. And so to the play again, where the King and Queen by and by come, and all the Court, and the house infinitely full. But the play, when it come, though there was here and there a pretty saying, and that not very many neither, yet the whole of the play had nothing extraordinary in it all, neither of language or design, insomuch that the King I did not see laugh nor pleased from the beginning to the end, nor the company, insomuch that I have not been less pleased at a new play in my life, I think.

The company was a good one. It consisted during the first few years of Theophilus Bird, Hart, Mohun, Lacy, Burt, Cartwright, Clunn, Baxter, Robert Shatterell, William Shatterell, Duke, Hancock, Kynaston, Wintersall, Bateman, Blagden. To whom were joined later, after the opening of the theatre, the following performers Hains, Griffin, Goodman, Lyddoll, Charleton, Sherly, Beeston; together with some boys who had been bred up under "the Master Actors" The women of this company were. Mrs. Corey, Mrs. Anne Marshall, Mrs. Eastlaw, Mrs. Weever, Mrs. Uphill, Mrs. Kness, Mrs. Hughes, Mis.

Rebecca Marshall, Mrs. Butler. Later came Mrs. Boutel, Mrs. Ellin Gwin, Mrs. Verjuice, Mrs. James, Mrs. Reeves. Mr Charles Booth was the book-keeper of the establishment as we have seen Such was the good company with which Drury Lane started As some of these players were to obtain much celebrity, and the playhouse itself was in its infancy, we shall, incidentally, see what were their merits and characteristics

As the new theatre continued to attract large audiences, it was often difficult to find admission, the house was so full \* The other house did not prosper quite so much, though public patronage was fairly divided. Almost at once the two managers found the advantage to this monopoly of the stipulation that all deserters should be turned back from either camp, though it is plain that, as the phrase runs, there was no love lost between them The reason was, that Booth had grown "very proud, and demanded 20*l.* for himself extraordinary, more than Betterton or anybody else, upon every new play, and 10*l.* upon every revive, which, with other things, Sir W Davenant would not give him, and so he swore he would never act there more, in expectation of being received in the other house, but the King would not suffer it, upon Sir W Davenant's desire that he would not, for then he might shut up house, and that is true He tells me that his going is at present a great loss to the house, and that he fears he hath a stipend from the other house privately He tells me that the fellow grew very proud of late, the King and everybody else crying him up so high, and that above Betterton, he being a more ayery man, as he is indeed. But yet Betterton,

\* Pepys, May 28th, 1663 "By water," he says, "to the Royal Theatre," that is, disembarking at the stairs where Waterloo Bridge now is, so proceeding up to Drury Lane Even now the playgoer from Pimlico often takes the same route—by the steamboats or railway from Westminster, along the river bank, to the Temple Station.

he says, they all say do act some parts that none but himself can do" \*

It will be thus seen that the engagement was not carried out in a loyal spirit. At the King's own house also the patentee had trouble with his players, for immediately on the opening, Bird, one of the company, died, and a dispute at once arose as to what was to be done with his share, the players insisting that it came to them of right. The King interfered, and decided, as was indeed only according to the legal construction of his patent, for Killigrew. The language was curt and peremptory. The manager, he said, had the sole right to admit or dismiss a player, and give him such allowance as he thought fit. He was entitled, therefore, to the full benefit of the share, or, "in case of mutiny," must submit to such penalties as he chose to inflict †. Indeed, both the King and the Duke of York, it was remarked, interfered practically in the concerns of the theatre that bore their name. This royal interest was shown in many ways, more particularly in presents of rich clothes, which, if not "cast off," had at least been worn. This custom, however, endured for more than a century later, and within recent memory the wardrobes of Drury Lane and Covent Garden contained many a suit that had belonged to noblemen and gentlemen of condition. The Merry Monarch attended the play about once a week, and scandalised the more decent portion of the community by the spectacle offered in the royal box, where Lady Castlemaine took occasion to prove to the public that her influence was unimpaired, by entering uninvited. Indeed, the grossly hypocritical pretence which was set out in the patent, of encouraging morality and good order, was now to be impudently cast aside, and it would almost seem as though the "encouragement" had been intended for manners of the opposite kind. The staid

\* Pepys, July 22nd

† Calend State Papers

were now raised each of them to four pounds, and others in proportion; as for myself, I was then too insignificant to be taken into their councils, and consequently stood among those of little importance, like cattle in a market, to be sold to the first bidder. But the patentees, seeming in the greatest distress for actors, condescended to purchase me. Thus, without any further merit than that of being a scarce commodity, I was advanced to thirty shillings a week; yet our company was so far from being full, that our commanders were forced to beat up for volunteers in several distant counties; it was this occasion that first brought Johnson and Bullock to the service of the Theatre Royal.

“Forces being thus raised, and the war declared on both sides, Betterton and his chiefs had the honour of an audience of the King, who considered them as the only subjects whom he had not yet delivered from arbitrary power, and graciously dismissed them with an assurance of relief and support.” Accordingly a select number of them were empowered by his royal licence to act in a separate theatre for themselves. It was said indeed that the King took great interest in the scheme, and was curious to see and speak with Betterton, having a great admiration for him. The point was of course raised as to whether the patent was not in *perpetuum*, and to the exclusion of all other theatres. But the lawyers, on being consulted, declared that the Sovereign was not to be bound by any act of his predecessor. The point was to be raised again in more formal shape, some nineteen years later, where we shall consider it.\* “This great point being obtained, many

Steele, in his “Theatre,” later on, quotes these opinions of counsel learned in the law: “This matter will appear as it ought to do, by the opinions of Pemberton, Northey, and Parker, who have been consulted by the successors of Davenant and Killigrew.

“Quære 1.—‘Whether the grant of a power to A. B. his heirs and assigns, by the Letters Patent, to erect a theatre, and to act plays, etc., be a good grant in

company not to bring on to the stage *anything profane, scandalous, or scurrilous*, as they would thus be no longer protected.” \*

Another of these rather hypocritical protests was issued on February 25th, 1664

Charles R Whereas great complaint hath been made to us of great disorders in the attiring rooms of the theatres of our dearest brother the Duke of York, under the government of our trusty and well-beloved William Davenant, by the resort of persons thither to the hinderance of the actors and interruption of the scenes Our will and pleasure is that no person of what quality soever do presume to enter at the door of the attiring house, but such only as do belong to the company and are employed by them Requiring the guards attending there, and all whom it may concern, to see that obedience be given hereunto, and that the names of the offenders be sent to us.†

It is curious to note the corrupting taste for show and spectacle—in fact, for turning what should be an appeal to the intellectual sense into mere titillation of the eye and ear. The splendour of scenes and machines set off by lights and colours and such materials, was only in keeping with the magnificence of a dissolute Court. One night, in the month of August, 1664, the lively manager, Killigrew, was sitting in the audience to watch the exertions of his company in a piece called “Bartholomew Fair,” when he communicated to his neighbour an ambitious theatrical scheme which he intended developing He proposed building a new opera-house in Moorfields There were to be four seasons of opera in the year, each six weeks long, set off by the finest scenery and music and machines that “Christendom could produce” He had accordingly sent out to Italy for singing artists, painters,

\* Calend State Papers

† State Paper Office

and other persons. This institute he intended to call "The Nursery," and it was to be, in fact, a sort of training-school for the other houses, and in the "off" season ordinary plays would be given.\* He had already secured a licence from the King directed to one Legge, "for breeding up players under the oversight or approbation of the two patentees."†

Now the Plague suspended all performances for eighteen months, a long fast and terribly felt. Indeed, we find in November, 1666, that well-known playgoer, Mr. Pepys, going "to church for thanksgiving-day, but the town do say it is hastened before the Plague is quite over, but only to get ground of plays to be publicly acted which the bishops would not suffer till the Plague was over." By December 7th both houses had acted fourteen days.

In 1666, Mr. Shirley, the dramatist, died "being burnt out of his house in Fleet Street, and being extremely affected by the loss and terror, he and his wife died within twenty-four hours." And two years later, in 1668, Sir W Davenant, aged sixty-three. On July 11th, at the King's Playhouse, Mr. Pepys witnessed a curious spectacle, "to see an old play of Shirley's called 'Hyde Park,' the first day acted, where horses are brought on the stage. . . . There is a foot and a horse race, the first passes over the stage" The visitor finds his way behind the scenes, where he has friends

5th Oct. 1667 To the King's house, and there going in met with Knipp, and she took us up into the tireing-rooms, and to the women's shift, where Nell was dressing herself, and was all unready, and is very pretty, prettier than I thought. And into the scene-room, and there sat down, and she gave us fruit, and here I read the questions to Knipp, while she answered me, through all her part of "Flora's Figarys," which was acted to-day. But, lord! to see how they were both

\* Pepys, August 2nd, 1664

† Calend State Papers

painted, would make a man mad, and did make me loath them, and what base company of men comes among them, and how lewdly they talk ! And how poor the men are in clothes, and yet what a show they make on the stage by candlelight, is very observable. But to see how Nell cursed, for having so few people in the pit, was strange , the other house carrying away all the people at the new play, and is said nowadays to have generally most company, as having better players. By and by into the pit, and there saw the play, which is pretty good —7th May, 1668 To the King's house , where going in for Knipp, the play being done, I did see Beck Marshall come dressed off of the stage, and look mighty fine, and pretty and noble ; and also Nell in her boy's clothes mighty pretty. But, lord ! their confidence, and how many men do hover about them as soon as they come off the stage, and how confident they are in their talk !—On 19th March, 1666. After dinner we walked to the King's playhouse, all in due, they being altering of the stage to make it wider . But God knows when they will begin to act again, but my business here was to see the inside of the stage, and all the tiring-rooms and machines , and, indeed, it was a sight worthy seeing . But to see their clothes, and the various sorts, and what a mixture of things there was , here a wooden leg, there a ruff, here a hobby-horse, there a crown, would make a man split himself to see with laughing , and particularly Lacy's wardrobe and Shotrell's. But then again to think how fine they show on the stage by candlelight, and how poor things they are to look at too near hand, is not pleasant at all. The machines are fine, and the paintings very pretty.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE PLAYS AND ACTORS.

No one is so likely to have good and sufficient information about the stage and actors as an intelligent prompter, and the English stage has always been well supplied for many generations with men of mark and weight of this kind “Old Downes,” as he is called, was the first of these sagacious officers, whose “Sketches and Notes,” quaintly written, are, on the whole, accurate enough He shall introduce himself

The editor of the ensuing Relation, being long conversant with the plays and actors of the original company, under the Patent of Sir Wilham Davenant, at his theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, opened there 1662. And as book-keeper and prompter, continued so, ’till October 1706 He writing out all the parts in each play; and attending every morning to the actors’ rehearsals, and their performances in afternoons; emboldens him to affirm, he is not very erroneous in his Relation But as to the actors of Drury Lane Company, under Mr Thomas Killigrew, he having the account from Mr. Charles Booth, sometimes book-keeper there, if he a little deviates, as to the successive order, and exact time of their plays performances, he begs pardon of the reader and subscribes himself, his very humble servant,—JOHN DOWNES.

Book-keeper means here, says Waldron, not one who keeps accounts, but the person who is entrusted with, and holds a

book of the play, in order to furnish the performers with written parts, and to prompt them when necessary. In “The Spanish Tragedy, or, Hiernonimo is Mad Again,” a play is introduced, as in “Hamlet,” and this is spoken relative to it

Here, brother, you shall be the book-keeper.

He first tells us of the Drury Lane company at the Restoration, whose names were, *viz.*

Mr. Theophilus Bird, Mr. Hart, Mr. Mohun, Mr. Lacy, Mr. Burt, Mr. Cartwright, Mr. Clun, Mr. Baxter, Mr. Robert Shatterel, Mr. William Shatterel, Mr. Duke, Mr. Hancock, Mr. Kynaston, Mr. Wintersel, Mr. Bateman, Mr. Blagden, Mrs. Rebecca Marshal, Mrs. Rutter, Mrs. Verjuice, and Mrs. Knight.

The company being thus compleat, they opened the New Theatre in Drury Lane, on Thursday in Easter week, being the 8th day of April, 1663, with “The Humourous Lieutenant” Note — This comedy was acted twelve days successively

[Davies notes that, in the list of fifteen plays, there are seven of Beaumont and Fletcher, three of B Jonson, and three only of Shakespeare, so little was this great author known and followed at that time] Note — That these being their principal old stock-plays; yet in this interval from the day they begun, there were divers others acted.

[In another list of twenty-one plays there are only a couple of Shakespeare’s. One was “Catiline’s Conspiracy”] These being old plays, were acted but now and then, yet being well performed, were very satisfactory to the town.

Next follow the plays writ by the then modern poets, as “The Indian Emperour,” and others of Dryden.

“In another piece,” he notes of Goodman, “his part being to fight with Mr. Harris, was unfortunately with a sharp foil pierced near the eye; which so maim’d both his hand and his speech, that he can make but little use of either, for which mischance he has received a pension ever since 1673, being thirty-five years ago.”

After enumerating a number of plays, our prompter goes on

Note — All the foregoing, both old and modern plays, being the principal in their stock and most taking, yet they acted divers others, which to enumerate in order would tire the patience of the reader, as, “The Country Wife,” “Love in a Wood, or St James’s Park,” “Amboyna,” “The Cheats,” “Selindra,” “The Surprisal,” “Vestal Virgin,” “The Committee,” “Love in a Maze,” “The Rehearsal,” in which last, Mr Lacy,

For his just acting all gave him due praise,  
His part in “The Cheats,” Jony Thump, Teg, and Bayes, }  
In these four excelling, the Court gave him the Bays. }

And many otheis were acted by the old company at the Theatre Royal, from the time they begun till the patent descended to Mr Charles Killigrew, which in 1682 he joined to Dr. Davenant’s patent, whose company acted then in Dorset Garden, which upon the union were created the King’s company, after which Mr Hart acted no more, having a pension to the day of his death from the united company.

I must not omit to mention the parts in several plays of some of the actors, wherein they excelled in the performance of them First, Mr Hart, in the part of Arbaces, in “King and no King,” Amintor, in “The Maid’s Tragedy,” Othello, Rollo, Brutus, in “Julius Cæsar,” Alexander Towards the latter end of his acting, if he acted in any one of these but once in a fortnight, the house was filled as at a new play, especially Alexander, he acting that with such grandeur and agreeable majesty, that one of the Court was pleased to honour him with this commendation that Hart might teach any king on earth how to comport himself.

Mr Wintersel was good in tragedie, as well as in comedy, especially in Cokes, in “Bartholomew Fair,” that the famous comedian Nokes came in that part far short of him Then Mr Burt, Shatterel, Caitwright, and several other good actors, but to particularise their commendations would be too tedious.

Mr. Downes next describes Sir W Davenant's company

Mr Betterton, being then about 22 years old, was highly applauded for his acting in all these plays, but especially for "The Loyal Subject," "The Mad Lover," Pericles, "The Bondman," Deflores, in "The Changling," his voice being then as audibly strong, full, and articulate as in the prime of his acting. Mr Sheppy performed Theodore, in "The Loyal Subject," Duke Atophil, in "The Unfortunate Lovers," Asotus, in "The Bondman," and several other parts very well, but above all the Changling, with general satisfaction. Mr. Kynaston acted Arthiope, in "The Unfortunate Lovers," the Princess, in "The Mad Lover;" Aglaura, Ismenia, in "The Maid in the Mill," and several other women's parts, he being then very young, made a compleat female stage beauty, performing his parts so well, especially Arthiope and Aglaura, being parts greatly moving compassion and pity, that it has since been disputable among the judicious whether any woman that succeeded him so sensibly touched the audience as he. After the Restoration (we are told by old Mr Cibber) it was a frequent practice of the ladies of quality to carry Mr. Kynaston, the actor, in his female dress, after the play (which began then at three o'clock), in their coaches to Hyde Park.

His company being now compleat, Sir William, in order to prepare plays to open his theatre, it being then a building in Lincoln's Inn Fields, rehearsed the first and second part of "The Siege of Rhodes" and "The Wits," at Apothecaries' Hall, and in spring, 1662, opened his house with the said plays, having new scenes and decorations, being the first that e'er were introduced in England.

Mr Betterton acted Solyman the Magnificent, Mr Harris, Alphonso, Mr Lilliston, Villeius, the Grand Master, Mr. Blegden, the Admiral, Mrs Davenport, Roxolana, Mrs. Saunderson, Ianthe, all parts being justly and excellently perform'd. It continued acting 12 days without interruption with great applause.

The tragedy of "Hamlet," Hamlet being performed by Mr. Betterton, Sir William (having seen Mr Taylor, of the Black-Fryars Company, act it, who being instructed by the Author,

Mr Shakespear) taught Mr Betterton in every particle of it, gain'd him esteem and reputation superlative to all other plays Horatio by Mr Harris, the King by Mr Lilliston, the Ghost by Mr Richards (after by Mr Medbuin), Polonius by Mr Lovel, Rosencrans by Mr Dixon, Guilderstein by Mr Price, 1st Gravemaker by Mr Underhill, the 2nd by Mr Dacies, the Queen by Mrs Davenport, Ophelia by Mrs Saunderson no succeeding tragedy for several years got more reputation or money to the company than this

"Love and Honour," wrote by Sir William Davenant this play was richly cloath'd, the King giving Mr Betterton his coronation suit, in which he acted the part of Prince Alvaro, the Duke of York giving Mr Harris his, who did Prince Prospero, and my Lord of Oxford gave Mr Joseph Price his, who did Lionel, the Duke of Parma's son, the Duke was acted by Mr Lilliston, Evandra by Mrs Davenport, and all the other parts being very well done the play, having a great run, produced to the company great gain and estimation from the town.

This custom, however, had nothing undignified, as the clothes were costly and of a gala sort "Romeo and Juliet" followed, after which, oddly enough, was given the same piece.

This tragedy of "Romeo and Juliet" was made some time after into a trag-comedy, by Mr James Howard, he preserving Romeo and Juliet alive, so that when the tragedy was revived again, 'twas play'd alternately, tragically one day, and trag-comical another, for several days together.

"The Rivals," a play, wrote by Sir William Davenant, having a very fine interlude in it, of vocal and instrumental music, mixt with very diverting dances, Mr. Price introduced the dancing by a short comical prologue, gain'd him an universal applause of the town. The part of Theocles was done by Mr Harris, Philander, by Mr Betterton, Cunopes, the jailor, by Mr. Underhill, and all the women's parts admirably acted, chiefly Celia, a shepherdess, being mad in love, especially in singing several wild and mad songs, "My Lodging it is on the Cold Ground," etc. She performed that

so charmingly, that not long after it raised her from her bed on the cold ground to a bed royal \* The play by the excellent performance lasted uninterruptedly nine days, with a full audience

Next followed a piece, oddly styled "Love in a Tub," of which, says our prompter

Sir Nich'las, Sir Fred'rick, Widow and Dufoy,  
Were not by any so well done, Mafoy.

The clean and well performance of this comedy got the company more reputation and profit than any preceding comedy, the company taking in a month's time at it 1000l.

"Cutter of Coleman Street," written by Mr Abraham Cowley. This comedy being acted so perfectly well and exact, it was performed a whole week with a full audience Note This play was not a little injurious to the Cavalier indigent officers, especially the characters of Cutter and Worm

Here we have one of the many instances of the play being made entertaining by being directed against a political party, as was to be the case in "The Nonjuror," "Cato," and many others We find a great nobleman—the Earl of Orrery—furnishing a piece, "Mustapha," the Court attending He was a diligent writer, for he supplied two others privately

"King Henry the 5th," wrote by the Earl of Orrery Mr. Harris acted the King, Mr. Betterton, Owen Tudor, Queen, Mrs. Betterton This play was splendidly cloath'd, the King in the Duke of York's coronation suit, Owen Tudor in King Charles's, Duke of Burgundy in the Lord of Oxford's, and the rest all new. It was excellently perform'd and acted 10 days successively.

After this, my Lord Orrery writ two Comedies, the first call'd "Gusman." the other, "Mr Anthony Gusman," took very well; the former [the other in the original] but in-

\* This was the Mrs Davies mentioned in Giammont

different. There being an odd sort of duel in it between Mr Nokes and Mr. Angel, both Comicks, meeting in the field to fight, one came armed with a blunderbus, the other with a bow and arrows

The reader will be struck by the pleasant little glimpses of theatrical life—all, however, coloured by the tinsel or splendour of the Court.

“The Impertinents, or, Sullen Lovers,” wrote by Mr. Shadwell. This comedy being admirably acted, especially Sir Positive At-all, by Mr Harris; Poet Ninny, by Mr. Nokes; Woodcock, by Mr Angel, Standford and Emilia, the Sullen Lovers, one by Mr Smith and the other by Mrs Shadwell. This play had wonderful success, being acted 12 days together, when our company were commanded to Dover, in May 1670. The King with all his Court meeting his sister, the Dutchess of Orleans, there This comedy and “Sir Solomon Single,” pleas’d Madam the Dutchess, and the whole Court extremely. The French Court wearing then excessive short lac’d coats, some scarlet, some blew, with broad wast belts, Mr Nokes having at that time one shoiter than the French fashion, to act Sir Arthur Addle in, the Duke of Monmouth gave Mr Nokes his sword and belt from his side, and buckled it on himself, on purpose to ape the French, that Mr Nokes lookt more like a drest up Ape, than a Sir Arthur which upon his first entrance on the stage, put the King and Court to an excessive laughter, at which the French looked very shaggin, to see themselves ap’d by such a buffoon as Sir Arthur. Mr Nokes kept the Duke’s sword to his dying day

The new theatre in Dorset Garden being finished and our Company after Sir William’s death being under the rule and dominion of his widow, the Lady Davenant, Mr Betteiton, and M<sup>r</sup> Hairis (Mr Chailes Davenant, her son, acting for her), they removed from Lincoln’s Inn Fields thither and on the ninth day of November, 1671, they opened their new theatre with “Sir Martin Marall,” which continued 3 days together, with a full audience each day, notwithstanding it had been acted 30 days before in Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and above four times at Court.

Here was given "The Tragedy of Macbeth," altered by Sir William Davenant, being diest in all its finery, as new cloaths, new scenes, machines, as flyings for the witches, with all the singing and dancing in it the first composed by Mr Lock, the other by Mr Channell and Mr. Joseph Priest, it being all excellently performed, being in the nature of an Opera, it recompenced double the expence it proves still a lasting play

Our prompter patronisingly adds next

Note — In this play, Mr. Otway, the poet, having an inclination to turn actor, Mrs. Bhen gave him the King in the play, for a probation part, but he being not used to the stage, the full house put him to such a sweat, and tremendous agony, being dash't, spoilt him for an actor. Mr Natt Lee had the same fate, acting Duncan, in "Macbeth," ruined him for an actor too

As new actois, and in the place of others, now came in Mr Anthony Leigh, Mr Gillo, Mr Jevon, Mr Percival, Mr Williams (who came in a boy, and served Mr. Harris), Mr. Boman (a boy likewise), Mrs Barry, Mrs Currer, Mrs Butler, Mrs Slaughter, Mis Knapper, Mrs Twiford [“Boman, or Bowman,” says Davies, “was supposed to be near ninety years old when he died, no coquette was ever more careful to conceal her age than this actor To those who asked him his age, his constant reply was ‘Sir, I am very well’ Anthony Leigh was a favourite actor of Charles the Second, who used to call him his actor”]

Then “The Conquest of China by the Tartars,” by Mr Settle In this play, Mr Jevon acting a Chinese prince and commander in it, and being in the battle vanquished by the Tartars Mi Jevon, instead of falling on the point of his sword and kill himself, rather than be [made] prisoner by the Tartars Mi Jevon, instead of falling on the point of his sword, laid it in the scabbard at length upon the ground and fell upon't, saying “Now I am dead,” which put the author into such a fret, it made him speak treble instead of double. Jevon’s answer was “Did you not bid me fall upon my sword?”

In February, 1673, the long-expected opera of "Psyche" came forth in all her ornaments—new scenes, new machines, new cloaths, new French dances. This opera was splendidly set out, especially in scenes the charge of which amounted to above 800*l*. It had a continuance of performance about 8 days, but "The Tempest" got more money.

"The Orphan, or, The Unhappy Marriage," wrote by Mr Otway Castalio, acted by Mr. Betterton, Polydore, by Mr. Williams, Chamont, Mr Smith, Chaplain, Mr Percival, Monimia, Mrs Barry, Serina, Mis. Monford. All the parts being admirably done, especially the part of Monimia. This, and Belvidera in "Venice Preserv'd, or, A Plot Discovered," together with Isabella, in "The Fatal Marriage," these three parts gain'd her the name of "famous" Mrs Barry, both at Court and city, for whenever she acted any of those three parts, she forced tears from the eyes of her auditory, especially those who have any sense of pity for the distress'd.

We have noted that through all these performances, so pleasantly set before us by Prompter Downes, there is a courtly aristocratical business, in which appear coronation suits on the stage—the costumes even curiously connected with the Court, the King and the nobles almost always present—much as the present heir to the Crown attends races with his friends—while noblemen and gentlemen supplied pieces. During this, the later period, half-a-dozen men of fashion, officers of the army and noblemen, could be counted, some of the first class, who devoted themselves to writing.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ACTRESSES.

THE period from the opening of the new playhouse in 1663 to the death of the King marks an era of dramatic laxness of morals, to which foreign countries with less pretension to decorum might turn their eyes with wonder. Happily, they are comparatively unacquainted with English literature, or our modern lofty reproofs of modern French breaches of decorum might meet with a just retort. The average reader talks of the “licence,” as it is called, of “the wits of the days of the Merry Monarch,” but it may be questioned if the stage of any country could produce a prologue written by a great poet, in which an apology is made for the mild character of the previous indecencies offered to the public, and a promise is given that in future no such shortcomings shall be complained of. This excuse was actually made by the admirable Dryden!

It is almost amusing to contrast the scrupulous purism which interdicted the fair sex from the boards, with the scandals which their presence there brought about within the short space of seven or eight years. It was thought such a bold indecent step, that a timorous apology was made on the first occasion that the innovation was attempted.

The introduction of women on the stage was a step dictated

by perfect dramatic propriety, and had obtained on the Continent long before. It seems difficult to conceive how the Shakespearian masterpieces could have been presented under such conditions, though it might appear, from the author's treatment of his female characters and their comparative inferiority to the male characters—girls disguising themselves as boys, etc—that he might have this disability in view. After all, this would have been but one more of the many artificial conditions we have to accept on the stage, and which habit or an effort of the mind might cure. But we must not judge the matter by our conception of what a performance the spectacle of a boy of our own period playing a lady's character would be. We have been accustomed to the sight of women's characters played by women, but, had we seen nothing but the contrary practice from our childhood, we might have been familiarised to it. It must be recollectcd, too, that the boys were carefully trained and instructed. In foreign countries, the King and his friends had been accustomed to the sight of female characters upon the stage.

This licence was to be associated with a brutality of manners which showed in how little respect the profession was held. There were two Marshalls on the boards—Anne and Rebecca—the former's performance having once excited the warm praise of that economical amateur, Mr. Pepys, for her playing in "The Indian Queen," "which was above his expectation most, for she did do her part most excellently well, as he ever heard woman in his life, sending him home mightily contented."\* Nor, in estimating the tone and manners of the green-room at this time, should we pass over the character of the two directors—Sir R. Howard and Mr Thomas Killigrew. These men of pleasure, though both had written plays, were scarcely

\* Mrs Gwynne's coarse but effective retort to these ladies, who were daughters of a Presbyterian divine, is well known.

likely to have been drawn to the stage by a pure love of art, and it is curious that both their ladies had to appeal to the King to protect their fortunes. The case of Lady Howard seems to have been one of great hardship. She had brought her husband a fortune of some two thousand a year, yet he had shut her up in a house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, with a miserable allowance of six pounds a week, which he soon stopped, "to compel her to lie at his mercy, which," adds the lady, "she dare not do, while even her jointure had been mortgaged." Madame Killigrew's fortune, as we have seen, had also been made away with. This free-and-easy liver affected the same hypocritical anxiety for the observance of decorum and propriety that his royal master did, as, when one of the actresses, Mrs. Weaver, complained to His Majesty—who appeared to be the universal referee—of her being unjustly dismissed, Sir R. Howard pleaded that the charge was quite unfounded, she had voluntarily brought all her parts, and had given out in the green-room that she would not act any more, even though she was much pressed to stay. They presently discovered the reason, which was that the lady was *enceinte*. "Therefore," says the director, "we were glad of her absence, wishing the stage to be a place of credit, and not one that persons of honour would avoid."\*

A great proportion of the plays offered were masterpieces; but in such of the list as were written by inferior "hands" the characters and incidents were treated in a broad and solid style, with a knowledge of human nature beside which the performances of our modern times are superficial and meagre.

A conspicuous figure at this era, whose prominence is deeply significant of the state of the stage, is a notorious lady with whose career the mild term "frailties" is usually associated. This indulgence seems extraordinary, as, beyond a certain

\* Calend. State Papers, 1664

good-nature often found in company with vice, and an absolute want of shame when on the boards, there was little to distinguish the actress in question. This was the notorious Nell Gwynne, an "orange-girl" at the theatres, and her claims to histrionic merit did not rise beyond a certain effrontery and those arts which, in the time of the late Empire, made the reputation of the notorious Teresa, the attraction of the cafés-chantants. It has been said that she was excellent in lively characters of comedy, but it is probable that her gifts were merely those of assurance, founded on the certain encouragement of her audience, ready to favour any extravagance. In a country like this, where the sense of public propriety affects prudishness, the foreigner might smile when he is carried to view a large room in one of the royal palaces where all the notorious favourites of this reign, including the fortunate orange-girl, are represented in bewitching and even poetical costume, while on Sundays it is crowded by the British *bougeois*, his wife and family, who learn, from the convenient handbooks supplied to them, the whole story of these doubtful personages. Custom has familiarised us to this curious spectacle, and we talk pleasantly of "the Court beauties," but on a stranger it must have a curious effect.

As we walk down Drury Lane, and nearly touch the point where it branches into Wych Street, we shall be struck by two old overhanging framed houses, grimed, mouldy, and fast tumbling to pieces. These are Nos 85 and 86. They are like old Rouen houses, and are destined to endure but a short time. One, now a broker's shop for old iron and "odds and ends," used to be the Cock Tavern, where she had attended, and "filled strong waters for the gentlemen." In April, 1667, Pepys saw her standing at the door of her lodgings, "in her smock sleeves and bodice, looking upon one. She seemed a mighty pretty creature." Bishop Burnet describes her as

"Gwyn, the indiscreet and wildest creature that ever held sway in a Court, continued to the end of the King's life in great favour, and was maintained at a vast expense" She is again happily introduced by the eminent habitué of the stage, Mr Pepys. "To the King's house, and there saw 'The Humourous Lieutenant,' a silly play, I think, only the spirit in it that grows very tall and then sinks again to nothing, having two heads breeding upon one, and then Knipp's singing did please us. Here in a box above we spied Mrs. Pierce, and going out they called us, and so we stand for them, and Knipp took us all in, and brought to us Nelly, a most pretty woman, who acted the great part Cælia to-day very fine, and did it pretty well, I kissed her and so did my wife, and a mighty pretty soul she is"

Of her manners and bearing, a tolerable idea may be gathered from others of Mr. Pepys' lively sketches on his visit to the playhouse on April 3rd, 1665. "All the pleasure of the play was, the King and my Lady Castlemaine were there, and pretty witty Nell, at the King's house, and the younger Marshall sat next us, which pleased me mightily" Two years later, at "The Maiden Queen," he was equally delighted "The truth is, there is a comical part done by Nell, which is Florimell, that I never can hope ever to see the like done again by man or woman. The King and Duke of York were at the play. But so great performance of a comical part was never, I believe, in the world before as Nell do this, both as a mad girl, then most and best of all when she comes in like a young gallant; and hath the notions and carriage of a spark the most that ever I saw any man have. It makes me, I confess, admire her."

This was in March, in July she eloped with Lord Buckhurst to Epsom; but returned to her duties in three weeks to take a serious character in "The Indian Emperour," which, as was to be expected, she did "most basely" The

time, however, was now come when she was to attract the royal admiration, already much diverted by other objects.

Would we have an idea of the coarse arts that were the delight of the refined Court, we have only to listen to "Mrs. Ellen" speaking an epilogue. She was carried in as a corpse on a bier at the end of the play, and we can hear the roars of riotous laughter with which the familiar spectacle was greeted. On which, starting up and turning to the bearers, she called out

*Hold, are you mad? you damned confounded dog!*  
I am to rise and speak an epilogue.

Concluding with her own epitaph, which she said should be ·

Here Nelly lies, who, though she lived a slattern,  
Yet died a Princess acting in St Cattrin'.

The marvel really is to think of Dryden, a poet of the first rank and dignity, thus degrading himself to supply a creature of this kind with rhymes, the aim and intent of which was only too obvious. Indeed, these prologues and epilogues, which form a series, could only have been spoken by persons of the character and profession to whom they were entrusted. The "glorious John" must have been flattered when he learned that his lines had proved so piquant, that the King that very evening came behind the scenes and carried away the speaker to sup with him. According to another version the victory was gained a year later, and after a different fashion. Noakes, the low comedian of the Duke's House, having a part in a bad play, contrived to make it successful by appearing in a hat with a large brim, a device known to every era of the stage. At the King's House, before the curtain rose, Mrs. Ellen appeared in a hat of the most enormous dimensions, with a brim as large as a coach-wheel. The King and the courtiers

were convulsed, and the house followed suit, as the refined Nell began

This is the hat, whose very sight did win ye,  
To laugh and clap, *as though the devil were in ye*

Again we turn back and read the language in which the monarch addressed his patent to Davenant "Forasmuch as many plays do contain profane, obscene, and scurrilous passages, . . . we do strictly charge, command, and enjoin that from henceforth no new play shall be acted containing any passage offensive to piety and good manners" In practice the condition of the patent proved to be, that it was "commanded and enjoined" that plays only of a "scurrilous and obscene" character were to be performed

The favours and honours that followed are matters of history Apartments in the palace of Whitehall, title of "Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen," . . . her son created a duke!\*

The good Evelyn describes with sorrow the scene he witnessed in St James's Park "The impudent comedian," as he called her, "she looking out of her garden on a terrace at the top of the wall, and talking with the King standing on the green walk under it" The more complaisant Burnet treated her indulgently as "the indiscretest and wildest creature that ever was in a Court," and what he learned from the Duke of Buckingham rather goes against the popular theory of her disinterestedness During her reign it seems she obtained no less than sixty thousand pounds from her royal admirer. Some very original papers relating to Nell Gwynne have come to light, and when the late Mr Peter Cunningham wrote his account of

\* It has been doubted whether the King could have proceeded to the incredible "blackguardism" of giving such a person even the title of his wife's "lady of the chamber", but Mr Pegge, an industrious antiquary, ascertained the fact

her he was able to discover only a single letter of hers—not, of course, in her handwriting, as she could barely sign her initials. Since that time other letters have been found. Thus she wrote, and the following curious memorandums and bills for services rendered to her, 1674–76, were in the possession of Mr. Cole, the well-known autograph collector

These papers are reliques of the Exchequer records. Thomas Turner, joiner, rendered his "bill for stofe and worke don for Madam Guines' bedchamber, May, 1674, the amount 23*l.* 19*s.* 8*d.*," but she rarely paid in full, the account was settled August 25, for 20*l.* 10*s.* The carver's bill for two seats for Madam Gwin has the following items—"For four feet, 12*s.*, for four elboes, 10*s.*, and for the two backs, 1*l.* 12*s.*, in all, 2*l.* 14*s.*" In 1675 Edward Jenkinson, her brewer's bill, shewed charges of strong ale at 8*s.* 7*½d.* per kilderkin, and ordinary ale at 6*s.* There are frequent barrels of eights, but the amount is torn. The shoemaker's bill from Feb. to April is curious for the description of the satin and lace materials of the shoes Henry Robins' bill for gold and silver lute, shews the amount for the months from April to June to have been something considerable. In July the broad lace for ruffles came to 14*l.* 12*s.* In June, July, and August are bills of Elizabeth Bowman, one being, "for 2 white sasnet hounds, with scarfes to um, and a doz of children's white gloves" for Nelly's children. John Cooke, a bill "for a coch and 6 horses," the receipt explains this as "going to Windsor in a flying coach, etc" This was paid July 26th On June 17th she had a new chair, covered with the best neat's leather, and ornamented with the best water-gilt nails, the window frames and irons gilded The charge 34*l.* 11*s.*, but, as usual, she did not pay more than thirty pounds in full. Richard Howe's bill was paid July 17, for three night-gowns and three "peticots," all of white satin. At this time she paid 3*l.* per ann. for water, 20*s.* per ann to the scavenger, and the annual tax for the poor, 2*l.* 12*s.* Chennell, her plumber, was paid August 20, "For solder yoused about the mount, and for labour for that and the bellcony," receipt defective. In the kitchenmaid's bill from January 17–26, 1676, "A hen with egges" is charged

2s 6d. Henry Guy, from Whitehall Treasury Chamber, presented Sir Robert Howard, June 28, 1680, "a list of payments out of excise money." Among them is "To Mrs Gwynne, 250l." Nelly's bills for horse meat, supplied by John Topham, amounted to considerable sums.

There is a well-known capital speech of hers to the mob, too coarse to be repeated, but which is truly characteristic of her. About seventy years ago, "the late Lord Vere, afterwards Duke of St Albans, used to tell that on every 30th January during the reign of the Stuarts the Court would wear mourning, but that his grandmother, Mrs Gwynne, dressed up his father, when a boy, in the gayest and most tawdry dress she could find, and sent him into the drawing-room to the King."

This brings us into very close contact with Nell Gwynne's era. But, in truth, the eyes turn away with shame from this degrading time, the minor incidents of which reveal the wranglings of denizens of the Seven Dials.

There have been singular testimonies of her popularity. It has often been related how she persuaded the Merry Monarch to build Chelsea Hospital, and, it is said, gave some of the ground. At the beginning of this century, there was a public-house close to the hospital bearing a rude image of her head, and her memory used to be toasted in convivial drams. A magazine writer in the year 1805 speaks of "an eminent goldsmith who died in London about forty years since, and who used to relate that, when he was an apprentice, he recalled his master making a splendid service of plate to the King's order for the Duchess of Portsmouth, that a great concourse of people used to throng to the shop, throwing out curses against the Duchess, but all were unanimous in wishing the present had been for Mrs. Gwynne." This connection with Chelsea may have been owing to her visits to her mother, who lived there.

Madame de Sévigné, in one of her letters, mentions that the favour enjoyed by Nell excited much jealousy on the part of the Duchess of Portsmouth, which was further stimulated by insults and grimaces on the part of her rival. She also describes her as young, wild, confident, and of an agreeable humour, singing, dancing, and acting her part with grace

Her country residence was at Bagnigge Wells, where a bust of her used to be seen. Her town house was on the south side of St James's Square, looking into Pall Mall, and near the south-east angle of it. The sides of the back room were, within living memory, covered with looking-glass. Her stature was short, her hair inclined to be red, her eyes small and lively, and she was inclined to *embonpoint*. She was interred in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, Dr Fennison, the vicar, afterwards archbishop, preaching a sermon. She left a daughter, who married into the Ratchiffe family.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE COURT AND THE PLAYERS

THE Plague and the Great Fire of London, which raged during the years 1665 and 1666, were a serious interruption to the dramatic amusements of the City, though, as a moral warning, they seem not to have had any effect. We, indeed, hear of “Fast Days for the Fire” and such official acts; also of “the continued viciousness of the Court,” and the contempt into which the King was falling. “The Court is all full of vests, only my Lord St. Albans not pinked, but plain black, and they say the King says the pinking upon white makes them look too much like magpies, and therefore hath bespoke one of plain velvet.” The ladies were meditating wearing “short coats above their ankles,” and while ruined streets and the *débris* of blown-up houses were still smoking, the courtiers were eagerly looking forward to the opening of the playhouses. The opening-nights were fixed for the last week in November, 1666. But even then public decency was a little revolted, and Mr. Pepys was “in mighty pain” as he sat looking on at “The Maid’s Tragedy,” and kept his cloak about his face for fear he should be recognised. Theatrical business had, however, suffered a shock, and Mr. Killigrew confessed that his

audiences were not half what they used to be before the fire. He could, however, appeal to the excellent reforms he had introduced, and though the house had only been open some three years, might point with pride to the contrast his theatre offered to the arrangements of the old days. As he told Mr. Pepys at a musical party one night, the stage was now “by his pains a thousand times better and more glorious than ever heretofore. Now wax candles, and many of them, then not above 3lb of tallow; now all things civil, no rudeness anywhere, then, as in a bear-garden; then two or three fiddlers, now nine or ten of the best, then nothing but rushes upon the ground, and everything else mean, now all otherwise, then the Queen seldom and the King never would come, now, not the King only, but all civil people do think they may come as well as any”

It is not difficult to define the position of the players at this time. The mere element of character may be left out of consideration, for there were but few shreds left to divide among the ladies and gentlemen that frequented the Court. The want of it, therefore, could hardly be made a reproach. We find actors and actresses at the houses of persons with some pretence to respectability, or who, at least, were not *affichéd* as belonging to the free-livers. The men were the companions of the courtiers, and conducted themselves with a riotous insolence, and yet it is plain that this was only the tolerance of conviviality, and that the superior caste was ready at any moment with haughty insolence to make them know their place. It was complained, indeed, that their airs and arrogance was growing intolerable. One of the first theatrical scandals after the Fire, which illustrated this behaviour, was the escapade of Lacy, a player of Irish characters, such as “Teague,” and comic parts that depended on mimicry. A new play by Mr. Howard, brother of Sir Robert, entitled “The

"Change of Crowns," on April 15th, had excited extraordinary interest, probably from anticipation of what was to take place. People of consideration had to stand during the performance, while crowds were turned away from the doors. The King with all the Court were in the boxes. It proved a most amusing performance, and was enjoyed heartily by all. "A play of Ned Howard's," says Pepys, "the best that I saw at that house, being a great play and serious; only Lacy did the country gentleman come up to Court with all the imaginable wit and plainness about the selling of places, and doing everything for money. The play took very much. It was bitter, indeed, but very fine and witty." The actor threw such meaning and personality into his part, that the application could not be mistaken. No better proof could be given of the insolence of the petted actors and of the contempt they felt for those that petted them. The King was furious. The offending actor was at once taken into custody, and the play stopped. Major Mohun went, in the name of the company, to the King, and begged for remission, which was granted, but the resumption of the scurrilous play was forbidden. The actor was released, and coming to the theatre, made the author "fool of the play"—Ned Howard—but Mr. Pepys will tell the rest of the story. "He congratulated him on his release, upon which Lacy cursed him as that it was the fault of his nonsensical play that was the cause of his ill-usage. Mr. Howard did give him some reply, to which Lacy answered him, that he was more a fool than a poet; upon which Howard did give him a blow on the face with his glove, on which Lacy, having a cane in his hand, did give him a blow over the pate. Here Rolt and others, that discoursed of it in the pit this afternoon, did wonder that Howard did not run him through, he being too mean a fellow to fight with. But Howard did not do anything but complain to the King of it,

so the whole house is silenced and the gentry seem to rejoice much at it, the house being become too insolent" Everything in this scene is characteristic—the brutal insolence of the player, the wonder of the fine gentlemen that he was not run through the body, and the mean tolerance of the "fool of the play" The result, as we learn, was that the house was once more shut up

All this shows how the taste for personality was gaining ground, and found to be the attraction of the playhouse. The intimacy between the Court and the players was accountable for this familiarity and freedom, which, in its turn, led to a mutual want of respect and unseemly quarrels, in which the dignity of the superiors suffered Nor was the King himself, ill respected as he was, inclined or able to support his own dignity. Fresh disorderly scenes were not wanting. The handsome Kynaston, considered to be very like the notorious Sir Charles Sedley, as was to be expected, was infinitely flattered by what he thought a compliment. He went so far indeed as to "dress at him," as it is called, upon the stage, in a suit of richly-laced clothes precisely the same, and walked in the park to display his finery. Instead of treating the matter with contempt or as a jest, which a "person of quality" of our day would do, Sir Charles took the following mode of showing his resentment He "got a person to accost Kynaston in the park, and saluted him as the baronet. Kynaston instantly personated Sir Charles, until the stranger, intentionally creating a quarrel, caned him severely In vain the actor protested that he was not the person the gentleman took him for the more he protested, the more was he chastised, on the ground of his endeavouring to evade punishment by a falsehood. When some of the actor's friends afterwards remonstrated with Sedley on his harsh treatment of an inoffensive man, "Why," said the

baronet, "the fellow has not suffered half so much in body as I have done in reputation, for all the town believes that it was myself that was thus publicly disgraced"

There is something highly amusing in this scene, and it suggests the amiable vanity of Goldsmith. It was not, however, to end there. Stung by this insult, the actor waited his opportunity, and availed himself of the opening which one of the abuses of his profession offered. A play called "*The Heiress*" was brought out in February, 1669, in which he had a part, and in which he mimicked the bearing and dress of his enemy. This pleasantry soon got abroad, and people went the next night of performance to enjoy this new entertainment, but found the doors closed. It was then known that Mr. Kynaston was lying in bed, sorely bruised and mauled, having been set on the night before by some men in the street and soundly cudgelled. The King was very angry when he heard of it, but Sedley coolly denied all knowledge of the matter. The play was performed the following evening, February 2nd, Beeston reading the part, and causing some amusement in the pit by having to use a candle, the scene being supposed to be dark. In about a week's time Kynaston was well enough to appear.

Neither courtiers nor players cared much for the undignified King, as indeed is well shown by a scene that took place a few days later. When the manager of the Royal Theatre jeered at the notorious Rochester before the King, he received a box on the ear, "which do give much offence to the people here at Court to see how cheap the King makes himself, and the more, for that the King hath not only passed by the thing and pardoned it to Rochester already, but this very morning the King did publickly walk up and down, and Rochester I saw with him as free as ever, to the King's everlasting shame to have so idle a rogue for his companion. How Tom

Killigrew takes it I do not hear." That droll, no doubt, had to "stomach" the affront.

The licence of the time was every now and then breaking out in some shameless, violent adventure, for which the actresses were accountable.

Thus an incident, connected with Nell Gwynne, occurred in 1666, and illustrates the savage licence that prevailed in reference to the ladies of the stage. It is set out in a "deposition" made on oath for the King, by Mrs Rebecca Marshall, which was dated February 8th. "On Saturday last," she says, "Sir Hugh, entering into the tyring house or behind the scenes of the playhouse, Mrs. Marshall taxed him with some ill language he had cast out against the woman actors of that house, and wondered he would come amongst them. Sir Hugh, being disgusted, grew into a heat and told her she lied, and concluded the injure with calling her a jade, and threatening he would kick her and that his footmen should kick her. On this, the actress, frightened at his menaces, complained to the King and desired his protection. On the Tuesday evening, having acted in the play and returning to her lodging, in the great entry going out of the playhouse she saw Sir Hugh standing there, which gave her some apprehension that he lay in wait to do her some mischief or affront." An actor was attending her home. A few doors from the playhouse a ruffian pressed hard upon her, so that she complained of him. He then seemed "to slink away," but near the entrance of the court where she lodges, the street being then full of coaches, the same ruffian ran close up to her and clapped a — upon her face and fled. She believes that the fellow was set on by Sir Hugh, because she had no difference with anyone else; it was also the day she had made her complaint at Court.

The spirited behaviour of this lady is some evidence that she, at least, was an exception to the general laxity

that was presently to be exhibited by her companions. Her sister, the elder Marshall, had obtained an honourable character in the traditions of the stage, and was long celebrated as the heroine or victim of a fine gentleman's outrage, or adventure, as it would be called by the Court. It would appear, however, that the adventure at least was mythical. "The high sentiments of honour," says Davies, the possessor of "the pretty wife," "in many of her characters, were correspondent to the dictates of her mind and justified by her own private conduct." From Count Hamilton she receives even a higher panegyric. As the story ran, which is told by him, "she was particularly admired in Roxalana, a character of heroic virtue, in one of Lord Orrery's plays." Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford,\* was so charmed with Mrs Marshall, that he pursued her in all the shapes a passionate and artful lover could assume. Distracted with the repulses his love received, he determined to seize her by force, as she came from the playhouse, but she, being informed of his design, obtained a party of the King's guards to protect her. His lordship attacked her chair, but was repulsed. His adventure was spread over the town. The gentlemen, who claimed a sort of right to behave with freedom to the females of the theatre, were angry and disappointed, while the ladies were pleased, and much extolled the conduct of the stage heroine. The King himself interposed in her favour and told the earl that, although by his own conduct he had too much countenanced the vice, he thought it bad enough *with* the consent of the fair; but that violence was unpardonable in a sovereign, and still more so in a subject. The earl promised to think no more of her, but in a few days he renewed his addresses, assuring her he could not live without her; he was so charmed, he said, with her exalted virtue, that he had

\* "History of the English Stage," 1741.

resolved, with her consent, to marry her. This bait Roxalana swallowed, and the earl was married to her by his coachman in the dress of a clergyman. Soon after this pretended marriage he took off the mask, told her the deceit, and bade her return to the stage. She threw herself at the King's feet, who commanded the earl to allow her a yearly income of 500*l*, nor would he permit his lordship to marry during the life of her son by him."

Mention of Roxalana suggests another shape of disorder, namely, the jealousies of the female performers. Mrs Barry and Mrs Bontell were later performing in this play, in which the rival queens competed not merely for the same lover, but in magnificence of raiment, jewels, tiaras, rich trains of stuff, always made the rival queens, acted by the finest women of the stage, interesting. A dispute arose between these ladies as to a veil, and, during the course of this piece, their rancour became inflamed by the speeches that were delivered, and one plunged her tin dagger some way into the flesh of the other. Mrs Woffington and Miss Bellamy were known, years later, to have a quarrel in the same play, and for the same reason, in sight of the audience.

Indeed the licence of the plays and players seemed to be fruitful in confusion. There was Sir W Coventry, a useful officer, to whom the King and his friends had taken a dislike, and were determined to get rid of. The Duke of Buckingham, with Sir R Howard, taking his cue from the Court, were writing a piece in ridicule of this worthy man. "They foolishly and sillily bring in two tables, like that which he hath made with a round hole in the middle in his closet to turn himself in; and he is to be in one of them as a master, and Sir J. Duncomb in the other, as his man and imitator, and their discourse in those tables about the disposing of their books and papers very foolish." Being a gentleman of spirit, he took a course

which must have surprised the jesters not a little. He went straight to Mr. Killigrew, “being offended with his being made so contemptible, as that any should dare to make a gentleman a subject for the mirth of the world,” and told him that he should tell his actors, whoever they were, that did offer at anything like representing him, that he would not complain to my Lord Chamberlain, which was too weak, nor get him beaten, as Sir Charles Sedley is said to have done, *but that he would cause his nose to be cut.*” Not content with this, he sent a challenge to one of the supposed authors, the Duke of Buckingham, which soon reached the King’s ears, who was delighted at the opening given him, and sent the gentleman to the Tower. It is plain that the popular estimate of the Merry Monarch will have to be revised, as there is something inconceivably spiteful and petty in all his conduct. Here again Tom Killigrew, like all jesters, ought to have put up with the affront offered to him. But the climax was to be reached in the better-known business of Sir John Coventry, which exhibits the King in an infamously degrading light.

The incident occurred in the month of October in the following year, 1670. The members of the House of Commons, and indeed all the respectable members of the community, were looking with anxiety and disgust on the playhouses and the disorders which the mixture of the players with the courtiers was causing. When the question of raising money was brought on, it was suggested in Committee that, “towards the Supply, every one that resorts to any of the playhouses who sits in the box shall pay one shilling, every one who sits in the pit shall pay sixpence, and every other person threepence.” The House disagreed, and the motion was opposed by the courtiers, who gave for a reason “that the players were the King’s servants, and a part of his pleasure.” Sir John Coventry on this rose and made a sarcastic

comment not very respectful to the King, which being reported at Court inflamed the King to fury, and it was determined, we are told, "to set a mark on Sir John, to deter others from taking a like liberty in future" The Duke of Monmouth, and the young sparks of the Royal Guard which he commanded, particularly resented the Act The House adjourned till after Christmas, and on the very night of the adjournment a party of three officers, with some five-and-twenty men, with Sir Thomas Sands and young Mr O'Brien, Lord Inchiquin's son, dogged Sir John to a tavern in the Haymarket where he took supper, and waited patiently up to two in the morning, till he was going home Near Suffolk Street they waylaid him, threw him down, and brutally slit his nose to the bone. It was believed that these Mohocks meant to cut it off altogether, but they were interrupted in this work and made good their escape When the House met again it was in a fury, and stern language was used by the constitutional members that recalled the days of Charles the First. It was declared that their lives and liberties were in peril, that it recalled the days of proscription under Sylla and the insolence of Praetorians. The Court at first tried to carry it with a high hand, and to bring the injured gentleman to account for his words. It even released the offenders from custody, but on the eve of the assembling of Parliament lost heart, and surrendered them to the civil power The House dealt with the affair in the sternest way, and passed an Act for the banishment of all such offenders from the kingdom, adding the mortifying proviso that the King's pardon was to be of no avail in sheltering them That the King had a share in prompting this outrage is probable The Duke of York told Burnet that he did all in his power to divert him from his intention. To complete the disgraceful character of the transaction, it was well known that Monmouth was a personal friend of Coventry's It is, how-

ever, gratifying to learn that medical science repaired the injury so skilfully that, beyond a scar, the nose showed no signs of the brutal outrage But the transaction was not forgotten, and rhymes and scurilous ballads celebrated the King's share in the transaction \*

From all these incidents it is evident that the influence of the stage was, during this era, a powerful element in the corruption of society The King, however, who resented so deeply the sarcasm of a Member of Parliament, was quite indifferent to the free and easy rallying of his boon companions ; for Rochester, as we have seen, might take such a liberty, while Tom Killigrew, the manager, might talk jestingly of fetching back Old Noll to teach him to govern. But the lowest depth was reached when the very comedians of his own theatre might venture to ridicule him, and read him a lesson, as it were, to his face. Howard, one of the shareholders, wrote a play called "The Duke of Lerma," in which the King's dissolute behaviour was held up to his face, the King himself and the whole Court being present. Everyone in the house saw the allusions, and actually expected that it would be stopped before the close But the Merry Monarch either affected not to see or was probably indifferent.

\* Thus Andrew Marvell, in his "Royal Resolutions"

If any bold Commoner dare to oppose,  
I'll order my Bravos to cut off his nose,  
I'll wholly abandon all public affairs,  
And pass all my time with Buffoons and Players

## CHAPTER X.

### “THE REHEARSAL” AND THE UNION.

ALL this record of personalities would not be complete without recording the production of that remarkable play, “The Rehearsal,” of which “The Critic” is a free adaptation, after the principle on which a modern play is adapted from the French. This happy piece of ridicule was, in part, written by a gay nobleman of the day. Nothing proves so convincingly the truth of the rather conventional praise of the witty courtiers of Charles the Second as this play. No duke of later times could be found to make a similar display. In it all those happy hits of Sheridan’s at stage customs, which have so often moved laughter, are anticipated. It had been ready for representation when the Plague came. It was the happy protest of a gay and spirited man against a solemn species of entertainment that was beginning to “bore” all playgoers of intelligence and spirit. Then was the reign of the tedious, long-drawn-out tragedies whose characters were so extravagantly heroic as to be out of all nature, where metaphors were so bombastic and far-fetched as to extort laughter rather than excite enthusiasm; while it is not without significance that when one of the prophets of the school, “Nat Lee,” became insane, his raving speeches differed but little from the high-flown bursts of his more rational moments.

Indeed, one of the mysteries of the stage has ever been the constant taste for the long-winded, long-drawn-out "predicatorial" pieces, which have been often in fashion. These "heroic" dramas, weary productions enough, are filled with long speeches of a poetical cast, and have little "business," as it is called. They appear to have been modelled on the dramas of Racine and Corneille. The truth is, they have always been in favour, and were produced side by side with vivacious and bustling comedies of the first order. Thus, in the early years of Charles the Second's reign, there was an element of turgid bombast and high-flown extravagance, which was supposed to represent passion, and only reached burlesque. It was this reign of solemn nonsense that produced "The Rehearsal." Davenant, Howard, and others, not to mention Dryden, supplied a long series of dramas conceived in this spirit. The difficulty is understanding how the public could have found satisfaction in them, for they would not have been offered unless they had been popular.

It was on the 7th December, 1671, that the well-known satirical play, "The Rehearsal," was first performed. This is one of those extraordinary pieces which themselves, and indirectly, have influenced the current of dramatic thought, and has been followed as a model by many others in successive generations. It is, however, false in principle, as the mimicry of mimicry and the copy of a copy is bad. Here we have a play and players' ridiculing plays and players. As is well known, the author was George Villiers, Duke of Buckingham, that extraordinary character, with a more extraordinary career—

A man so various, that he seem'd to be  
Not one, but all Mankind's Epitome  
Stiff in Opinions, always in the wrong,  
Was every thing by starts, and nothing long

But, in the course of one revolving Moon,  
Was Chymist, Fidler, States-Man, and Buffoon.  
Then all for Women, Painting, Rhyming, Drinking,  
Besides ten thousand freaks that dy'd in thinking.

How natural that so inconstant a temper should turn its thoughts to the stage \*

Our most noble author (says a commentator), to manifest his just indignation and hatred of this fulsome new way of writing, used his utmost interest and endeavours to stifle it at its first appearing on the stage, by engaging all his friends to explode and run down these plays, especially "The United Kingdoms", which had like to have brought his life into danger

The author of it being nobly born, of an ancient and numerous family, had many of his relations and friends in the Cockpit during the acting it, some of them perceiving his Grace to head a party, who were very active in damning the play, by hissing and laughing immoderately at the strange conduct thereof, there were persons laid in wait for him as he came out, but there being a great tumult and uproar in the house and the passages near it, he escaped, but he was threaten'd haid However the business was completed in a short time, tho' by what means I have not been informed.

This piece, which it may be conceived the duke could not have wholly written, but was assisted in the composition by Butler, Sprat, and another, was produced at Drury Lane The part of Bayes—repeated and copied by Fielding and Sheridan —was taken by Lacy, whom the duke took immense pains to instruct †

\* Mr Arber, in his reprint of "The Rehearsal," has collected all the testimonies—Burnet's, Dryden's, Peterborough's, Grammont's, Butler's, Fairfax's All, with the exception of the latter, are unanimous in representing him as an abandoned and inconstant profligate

† It has been said by some that this highly personal sketch was intended for Davenant, and by others for Dryden But Davenant was dead when it was produced, which would seem to exclude the idea Yet at the end of Act II

This play, or farce, offers glimpses of the stage-management of the time. We see Mr Ivory, when one of the actors says. "Sir, Mr Ivory is not come yet, but he'll be here presently, he's but two doors off." And we are told in a note that "Abraham Ivory had formerly been a considerable actor of women's parts, but afterwards stupify'd himself so far with drinking strong waters that, before the first acting of this farce, he was fit for nothing but to go of errands, for which, and meer charity, the company allowed him a weekly salary."

How much this piece has suggested to Sheridan will be seen from these specimens

PHYS Sir, to conclude,—

SMI What, before he begins?

BAYES No, sir, you must know they had been talking of this a pretty while without

SMI Where? In the tyring-room?

BAYES Why, ay, sir He's so dull! Come, speak again

Again

SMI Well, sir, but pray why all this whispering?

BAYES Why, sir—besides that it is new, as I told you before—because they are supposed to be polititians, and matters of State ought not to be divulg'd

SMI But, then, sir, why—

BAYES Sir, if you'll but respire your curiosit y till the end of the fifth act, you'll find it a piece of patience not ill recom-penc'd

[Goes to the door]

Then Lord Burleigh's shake of the head

Bayes falls down and breaks his nose, and in the next act carries a bit of brown paper upon his nose. It is known that Davenant was thus injured, as may be seen from his engraved portraits. On the other hand, this satire would lose half its point if he were not alive. It would seem that Dryden was pointed at, whose bitter sketch was no doubt a retort. The ridicule of the nose referred to the result of some accident to Dryden, and, indeed, the "brown paper" shows that the misfortune was of a different kind to the one that had occurred to Davenant.

PHYS Well, if they hear us whisper they'l turn us out,  
and no bodie else will take us

USH No bodie else will take us

SMI Not for polititians, I dare answer for it

PHYS Let's then no more our selves in vain bemoan .  
We are not safe until we them unthrone

USH 'Tis right

And, since occasion now seems debonair,  
I'l seize on this, and you shall take that chan

*[They draw their swords, and sit down in the  
two great chairs upon the stage.]*

BAYES There's now an odd surprise , the whole state's  
tuin'd quite topsi-turvy, without any puther or stir in the  
whole world, I gad.

Also

*Enter four men at one door, and four at another, with their  
swords drawn*

1 Sol. Stand Who goes there ?

2 Sol A friend

1 Sol. What friend ?

2 Sol A friend to the house.

1 Sol Fall on

*[They all kill one another Musich strikes.]*

BAYES Hold, hold *[To the musich It ceaseth]* Now  
here's an odd surprise, all these dead men you shall see rise  
up presently, at a certain note that I have made, in *Effaut  
flat*, and fall a dancing Do your hear, dead men? remember  
your note in *Effaut flat* Play on *[To the musich]*

Now, now, now O Lord, O Lord !

*[The musich play his note, and the dead men  
rise, but cannot get in order]*

Out, out, out! Did ever men spoil a good thing so? no  
figure, no ear, no time, no thing? you dance worse than the  
angels in "Harry the Eight," or the fat spirits in "The  
Tempest," I gad

Where the devil is he? Why, Pretty-man? why when, I  
say? O fie, fie, fie, fie, all's mair'd, I vow to gad, quite marr'd.

*Enter PRETTY-MAN.*

Phoo, pox! you are come too late, sir, now you may go out again, if you please. I vow to gad Mr ——a—— I would not give a button for my play, now you have done this.

PRET What, sir?

BAYES What, sir? 'Slfe, sir, you should have come out in choler, rous upon the stage, just as the other went off. Must a man be eternally telling you of these things?

The lively author of the new piece set himself to ridicule the prevailing taste. As it has been justly said, it was like "Don Quixote," for it can be read and enjoyed, though the absurdities described in it have passed away. "For easy wit, gay ridicule, strong burlesque, and happy parody, our language can boast nothing like it" \* Most of the works of authors of the day are burlesqued †

It was natural that such a system within the theatre should lead to violence outside and in the streets. Connected with this was the curious custom of giving a synopsis or explanation to help the audience, and a paper, such as the following, was distributed, probably sold, by "Orange Moll" ‡

\* Davies' "Miscellanies," vol iii c 43

† His instruction of the troops was intended for Dryden. According to another account it was Sir R Howard that was intended, and according to a third, Sir W Davenant. A character thus supposed to fit three personages must have been rather general in its outline. It is curious that the obvious objections to these suggestions should not have struck Sir W Scott and others who have written on the subject. Dryden and Howard were both writers on the establishment at which the piece was produced. Davenant had died a year or two before, and though delicacy would not have been likely to restrain the jesters of the day, still the point of the satire would have been lost. It is stated, however, that Lacy, who played the part, wore a black patch upon his nose, which seemed to point to Davenant's well-known infirmity. I should be inclined to think that this was meant as symbolical of what might be incident to a playwright's or an actor's life of the day, and to whom threats were constantly sent by some noble that "his nose would be slit." The Coventry affair, already described, had occurred only the year before. But see note, p 134.

‡ The "Key" tells us "there were printed papers given the audience before the acting of 'The Indian Emperor,' telling them that it was the sequel of 'The Indian Queen,' part of which play was written by Mr Bayes, etc. The con-

A curious incident that occurred during the year 1666 shows that, with all the allowance granted to the players, they were roughly reminded that they were the servants of the Court, meant to minister to its pleasures. Killigrew, whose taste for pleasure probably did not leave him much time for serious business, while at the same time he found that the management of a theatre entailed regular attendance, seems to have thought of delegating his authority to his three leading players, Lacy, Hart, and Mohun (or Moon, as he still continued to be called), by a formal letter of attorney. Of this proceeding the players, who were often discontented, made a personal complaint to the Lord Chamberlain, bringing forward also other grievances, that he had been despotic, exceeded his authority, etc. It was not likely that they would obtain redress at Court against his powerful influence, and they were accordingly told that Mr Killigrew had entire authority over them by his patent, which he had hitherto used but little, that the complaints of his delegating authority to the others were not well founded, as he may indeed have granted something of the kind to these persons, but that he had recalled it.

Nor was this favour exerted merely in keeping his actors in order for the manager. For that favoured man, the year after the burning of the theatre, received another important post.

In 1673, “the office of Master of the Revels, void by the

clusion of ‘The Indian Queen’ left little matter for another story to be built on, there remaining but two of the considerable characters alive—viz Montezuma and Orazia, thereupon the author of this thought it necessary to produce new persons from the old ones, and, considering the late Indian Queen, before she lov’d Montezuma, liv’d in clandestine marriage with her general, Traxalla, from those two he has rais’d a son and two daughters, supposed to be left young orphans at their death. On the other side, he has given to Montezuma and Orazia two sons and a daughter, all now supposed to be grown up to men’s and women’s estate, and their mother, Orazia (for whom there was no further use in the story), lately dead. So that you are to imagine about twenty years elapsed since the coronation of Montezuma,” etc.

death of Sir H. Herbert, who deceased the 27th April last, is now enjoyed by Thomas Killigrew, Esq., one of the Grooms of His Majesty's Bedchamber, at whose lodgings in Whitehall, any person or persons may be informed whether those who had licences from the said Sir Henry, or are otherwise concerned in the said office, may make their applications for renewing of former and of taking out new licences, or what else relates unto said offices." So ran the announcement in *The Gazette*.

We have now arrived at the close of this first period of the course of the Drury Lane Theatre. As we have seen, it could not boast of having been of much benefit to public taste, any influence that it did exercise was of an unwholesome kind. It had indeed become something like a casino, maintained for the royal diversion. But now the time was come for the catastrophe which seems so invariably to overtake all theatres of any pretensions, and thus early in 1672 was the series of great theatrical conflagrations to set in. The last piece performed was "The Miser," acted "at the King's Theatre, Covent Garden,\* before the fatal fire there." The conflagration took place in January, 1672, a most disastrous catastrophe, as some fifty or sixty houses about it were consumed, or had to be blown up, to prevent the flames spreading. These houses were of the framed gabled pattern,† one or two of which are still to be seen in Drury Lane, and which burnt like tinder. The loss was not very serious, as from the moderate sum it had cost—1500*l.*.—it could only have been of a temporary kind. That the damages were considered trifling is evident from the fact that it is not taken notice of by Cibber, or by scarcely any writers on the

\* For many years, till 1732, when the Covent Garden Theatre was built, Drury Lane Theatre was often described as that of Covent Garden.

There are two left nearly *vis-à-vis* to the Olympic Theatre—picturesque and quaint edifices, but crazy.

stage No time was lost in repairing the damages. Within a few weeks the company had moved to the old theatre in Lincoln's Inn, where, on February 26th, they opened with Beaumont and Fletcher's “*Wit without Money*.” The building of a new theatre was then entered upon, and it was determined that a house of more architectural pretensions than had yet been attempted should be erected. There appears to have been no difficulty in finding the money, though the manager's fortunes had not been prospering Living as he did in the riotous scenes of the Court, and at the same time competing in scenery and music with the other house, it was likely that he would soon become involved in debt.

A ballad that was sung about the streets celebrated the conflagration It was entitled, “On the Unhappy Conflagration of the Theatre Royal, January 25, 1672 ”

Ungrateful *Rlyneus* can you silent see  
The *Royal Stage* sink in this Tragedy?  
No sooner had they finished this *play*,  
Or, as some phrased it, *concluded th' work o' th' day*,  
But on a sudden a *Fierce Fire* gan rage  
In several scenes, and overspread the stage.  
The *Horrors* waiting on this dismal sight  
Soon taught th' *players* to th' *life to act a Flight*  
The *Boxes* where *splendouris* us'd to surprise  
From constellations of *bright ladies'* eyes,  
A different blazing lustre now is found,  
And th' music-room with whistle flames doth sound  
Then catching hold o' th' roof, it does display  
Consuming fiery trophies every way  
Engines—high wind—which seemed  
Confederate.  
Only the zealous hypocrite enjoyed  
To see his scourge thus casually destroyed.  
He cries “Just judgment!” and wished when poor Bell  
Rung out his last 't had been the stage's k-Nell.

No time was lost in setting about the erecting of a new theatre, and it became necessary to mortgage the ground, which was done for a sum of 2300*l*\* A capable architect was selected, no other than Mr. Wren, the favoured designer of St Paul's and the City churches, and who had already distinguished himself by erecting an Academic Theatre at Oxford. In December, 1673, when it was nearly completed, a new agreement was entered into between the manager, actors, and author of the house on the one side, and the builders on the other, contracting that a sum of 3*l.* 10*s* should be paid to the latter for every performance, and an additional sum *pro rata* if the contract were exceeded.†

There are other evidences that the proprietors found themselves pressed for means to carry out the large undertaking

\* Mortgage for 950*l* to Sir L Debusty, at 6 per cent., dated June 21st, 1673, and for 1600*l* to Magnus, dated July 13th in the same year See Ad MSS British Museum, 20

† "17 December 1673 Articles inter Thomas Killigrew, Jon Dryden, Robert Lewens, Charles Hart, Michaell Mohun, Nicholas Burt, John Lacy, Robt Shatterell, Wm Cartwright, Wm Wintersall, and Edd Kynnaston of the one part, and Edmond Ashton, Thomas Shippey, John Wolf, John Tombes, Joseph Wickens, and Thomas Jonson, builders, of the other pt , reciting that the former theater called the Theater Royall had binn lately demolished by fire , therefore the said Thomas Killigrew, Dryden, etc , covenant with Ashton, Shippey, and the rest of the builders Killigrew, Dryden, etc , should with all convenient speed after the said theater should be rebuilt and finished make use of the same to act & rep'sent comedyes, tragedyes, etc , and should not att any time afterwards make use of any other house or place in or about London, and that the chardges in rebuilding the said former theater did amount to 2400*l* And the said Hart and the rest of the company should or cause to be paid vnto & amongst the said builders and owners the sume of 3*l* 10*s* p diem for every day the said house was soe used and employed The sd Tho Killigrew, Dryden, etc , doe covenant as before that they and such other persons as should then after be admitted and taken into the said company should pay or cause to be paid to and amongst the said builders, there execrs etc theirre respective interests and shares of 3*l* 10*s* p diem for every day the said theater should be soe used and employed, and for s ich further sumes of money as had or should be layd out in rebuilding, finishing, and adorning the same over and above the 2400*l* And Killigrew, Dryden, etc , and theirre successors should for every day the sd theater should be used pay and divide amongst the builders a further sume of money, rent, or payment over and above the said 2400*l*, as 3*l* 10*s* p diem did bear 2400*l*"

they had engaged in They had determined to have a separate magazine, or “scene house,” for the scenery and decorations —a department which M Gainier, the architect of the new Paris Opera House, and other eminent authorities, have declared to be essential to a properly appointed playhouse It seems, indeed, to have been always a feature in the successive theatres at Drury Lane For this purpose they had to borrow moneys from Burt, one of the players, giving him as security a charge on the receipts\* The building cost 1600*l*, and the actor was to be paid out of the receipts a sum of 1*l* 13*s* 4*d* until the whole was discharged As he was a sharer in the venture, it is to be presumed he was content to go without interest on his loan Early in the following year the theatre was complete People were surprised to find that it was plain almost to shabbiness There was neither gold nor

\* The following is the arrangement made between the parties “This indenture, made the twentieth day of March in the 26 year of the reigne, etc , 1673, Between Thomas Killigrew, Esq , one of the gromees of his Majesty’s chamber, Robert Lewright, Esq , John Dryden, Esq , Charles Hart, Michael Mohun, John Lacy, William Wintershall, William Cartwright, Robert Shatterell, and Edward Kynaston, gentlemen, servants to the King and Queen’s Majesty for the acting of comedies, tragedies, and other interludes, of the one part, and Nicholas Burt, gentleman, servant to the King and Queen’s Majesty, as aforesaid, of the other part

“Whereas the said Thomas Killigrew (and the others aforesaid), have disbursed and laid out amongst them several great sums for the building of a scene house at the new playhouse called the Theatre Royall, for the making and providing of scenes, machines, cloaths, apparel, and other things to be used in or relating to the acting comedies, etc , at the said theatre, or in any other place where the company associated or to be associated for such acting shall act And whereas the said Nicholas Burt for his share did lay out the sum of 160*l* Now witness these presents that if the said Nic Burt shall continue an actor in the said company till his death, and shall happen to die within three years next after the date hereof his executors shall be paid out of the acting profits for every play they shall pay a sum of 1*l* 13*s* 4*d* until the whole shd be paid off Or if the said Nic Burt shall at any time hereafter within the said three years be minded to give over acting in the said company, that he shall be paid the sum of 1*l* 13*s* 4*d* until the said Nic Burt sickness or other casualty, become infirm, impotent, unable or unfit to act and perform his part, employment or undertaking in the said actings and performances upon or for the use of the stage and said

decoration The actor who came forward to speak the prologue written specially by Mr Dryden, delivered himself thus

A plain built house, after so long a stay,  
 Will send you half unsatisfied away  
 When fall'n from your expected pomp you find  
 A bare convenience only is designed  
 You who each day can theatres behold,  
 Like Nero's palace, shining all with gold,  
 Our mean, ungilded stage will scorn, we fear.

He explained that the King had desired this simplicity “Our Royal Master willed it should be so” And it was conveyed that this meagreness was all in the interests of the stage There was no wish to encourage that corrupt taste for French dancers, “machines,” scenes, etc , which obtained at the other house. Nothing, indeed, could be more humble than his tone

With broken borders half destroyed by fire,  
 With our small stock to humble roof retire ,  
 For fame and honour we no longer strive,  
 We yield in both and only ask to live

The idea that the “Royal Master” was really anxious to promote a stern dramatic simplicity was about as credible as the declaration in his patents, that he was eager to promote morality The truth was, it seemed hopeless to think of competing with the sumptuous theatre in Dorset Garden, which was

company of actors, and shall be so adjudged by the said Thomas Killigrew, his execs etc , and the major part of the said company That then he the said Nicholas Burt shall from that time he shall be so judged to be so unfit be paid for every day the said company shall act the sum of 1l 13s 4d till the said sum of 160l be discharged ”

It was also stipulated that on his retirement, sickness, or death, the property in the “scene house,” etc , should vest in the actors, and that if they ceased to act for more than three months that period should be added to the term of three years. (See the Shakespearean Society’s Papers, vol iii )

supported by a company of shareholders, and had cost 8000*l.*, and where no expense was spared in bringing out splendid spectacles Drury Lane had cost nothing like that sum, to raise which all the manager's resources had been pledged As we have seen, he had done his best to compete in opera, “machines,” and the rest, bringing singers from Italy His “Royal Master” had probably said to him that as he had no cash to back himself, it was no use trying to make head against a great company, and that he had better leave further competition alone This was likely enough to have been the sense of the advice he received This bated and depreciating tone might fairly become the established author of the house, who was now to receive a new mortification

The patronage of the Court often seemed to be bestowed by caprice, often dictated by a sort of mischief The lords about the King found enjoyment in mortifying an old-established favourite like Dryden, and when a writer, whose style and qualification suggested those of the playwrights who used to supply the East End theatres twenty or thirty years ago, was brought forward at the Duke's House, they followed the piece with enthusiasm This was “The Empress of Morocco,” by Elkanah Settle. The King and Court patronised it, it was “commanded” to be performed at the palace, and young ladies of title spoke the prologue and epilogue, a sumptuous edition, illustrated with pictures of the chief scenes, was brought out and sold at double price, while the author, beside himself with vanity, put on the title-page, “By Elkanah Settle, *His Majesty's servant*” Sir Walter Scott and other writers are lost in wonder at this freak of fashion, and cannot understand how it was that so empty and bombastic a production should have enjoyed such favour. But the truth was it was a triumph of *spectacle*, and the management had spared nothing to make it attractive, with the aid of the prints

and the stage business minutely set down. We can now call up actually what sort of performance a sensation play was two hundred years ago, and our whimsically popular caprice repeats its vagaries. Here we have the exact elements of our later days—a good writer put aside; a superb scenic display mistaken for the drama itself, and the writer complacently attributing the success of the manager's efforts to himself. We see in the engravings the rich proscenium, with its rich gilt bordering, like a Florentine frame, the royal escutcheon in the centre, framing the elaborate scenes; a dungeon in the first act, vaulted, and stretching back in perspective, the fleet of ships seen on the ocean, and flanked by two porticoes, like one of Claude's pictures. There was the strange view of “a hell,” not ineffective, a kind of ruin raised high in the centre, with angry and disturbed clouds, creatures with horns and wings, swaying round, and the last scene of which displayed the punishment of the villain of the piece. “Scene opens, and *he appears cast down on the guanches, being hung on a wall set with spikes.*” This spectacle is actually exhibited, a number of figures being fixed in various attitudes on a frame-work within an inclosure, their heads down, and limbs extended. When it is added that it was all set off with combats—“stabblings”—the blood appearing on the person's arm who was thus stabbed, combats, discharges of guns, “a Moorish dance, before the King and Queen, of some twenty figures, the blacks bringing in a huge spreading tree to dance round, it will be admitted that here were elements for a highly sensational piece likely to attract the crowd for weeks. Nothing could have been more mortifying to a writer of such reputation as Dryden then enjoyed than to have to look on at the elevation of such a rival, and he so far forgot his dignity as to enter into controversy with him.

The competition thus inaugurated was, like all such un-

healthy contests, to prove disastrous to one house, and certainly injurious to the other. In Cibber's language, always welcome. "This sensual supply of sight and sound coming in to the assistance of the weaker party, it was no wonder they should grow too hard for sense and simple nature, when it is considered how many more people there are that can see and hear than think and judge. So wanton a change of the public taste, therefore, began to fall as heavily upon the King's company as their greater excellence in action had before fallen upon their competitors. Taste and fashion with us have always had wings, and fly from one spectacle to another so wantonly, that I have been informed by those who remember it, that a famous puppet-show in Salisbury Change (then standing where Cecil Street now is) so far distressed these two celebrated companies that they were reduced to petition the King for relief against it." In truth, it was hopeless to think of vying with the splendour of Dorset Gardens, an establishment that was conducted in a style which would have been considered handsome according to modern canons. The wonder is indeed not that this should have been so, but that London houses up to that time should have been in such a rude state. When we think that the theatre at Versailles was the work of the same generation, and that there were architects like Wren and Inigo Jones, we might have expected more pretentious structures. The new house in Dorset Gardens was prettily situated on the river, the lower part forming a sort of arcade resting on pillars, while the *façade* terminated in a sort of Dutch roof. It was of stone and richly decorated. Within, nothing could surpass its splendour, the touch of so eminent a master was conspicuous in a building of this kind, finely placed as it was by the waterside. It was a most elegant and graceful structure, and the site will be found where the City Gas Works used lately to stand. But the Embankment has, of

course, in an odd way confused, by the creation of new ground, many of the old landmarks. The design seems to suggest some of the old smaller town-halls we see in Holland, there is one in Flushing not unlike it. The front, which faced inland, consisted of a small block in three divisions, but supported on pillars, while over the centre a massive cupola rose, wide as the centre portion. Each corner was flanked by a statue, the work of Gibbons, and representing the usual Tragedy and Comedy. The garlands and other decorations showed the taste of the sculptor. The front to the river was singularly elegant—full of detail with balustrades, the *façade* being divided by specially elegant pilasters, the lower portion forming a sort of arcade. The centre was divided into double arches, that on the right and left supported on flattened arches.

Plain, however, as was new Drury Lane in comparison with its rival, it was still a handsome house, and as Wren was commended for the skill with which he supported a great ceiling in his Oxford Theatre, he had another opportunity here for obtaining the same praise\*. Unfortunately, no complete view of the interior has come down to us, which would have been highly interesting as a specimen of Wren's genius in the most attractive of all architectural displays, but we can have a glimpse of two essential portions, viz the proscenium and the platform, the arrangement of the galleries and boxes can be supplied from good authority and reasonable conjecture.

It is curious to think that even the ordinary "pay-sheets" of theatres—which turn up at sales of old papers—should have followed so old a model, for even the office accounts of the theatres at this period have come down to us, and we have the

\* About a hundred years later, when Adams remodelled the house, a finely-executed engraving by Pastorini was issued, and as it appears to have been done to scale, it is not difficult to work out an approximation to the measurements of the shell of the building. It would appear to have been about 100 feet wide by 120 long.

treasurer's account of the receipts and expenses of the King's company on the nights of the 12th and 26th December, 1677  
The play was, “All for Love.”

	£	s	d
The King's box . . . . .			
Mr Hayle's box . . . . .		3	0 0
Mr Mohun's boxes . . . . .		1	12 0
Mr Yeate's boxes . . . . .		0	12 0
James's boxes . . . . .		2	0 0
14 Mr Kent's pit } 117 . . . . .		14	12 0
10 Mr. Britain's pit } 63 . . . . .		4	14 6
30 Mr Bray's gallery } 18 Mr Johnson's gallery } 13 . . . . .		1	13 0
	<hr/>		
	£28	4	6
House rent . . . . .		5	14 0
Music . . . . .			

For “Death of Alexander the Great” the account ran :

	£	s.	d.
The King's box . . . . .		1	10 0
Mr Hayle's boxes . . . . .		2	16 0
Mr Mohun's boxes . . . . .		3	16 0
Mr Yeate's boxes . . . . .		1	15 6
James's boxes . . . . .		2	4 0
34 Mr Kent's pit, 112 } 191 . . . . .		23	17 6
16 Mr. Britain's pit, 79 } 144 . . . . .		10	16 0
30 Mr Bray's gallery, 100 } 40 Mr Johnson's gallery, 44 } 119 . . . . .		5	19 0
Mrs Kempton . . . . .			5 0
	<hr/>		
	£52	19	0
House rent . . . . .		5	14 0
Music . . . . .			

The pit price was then 2s 6d, the lower gallery 1s 6d, and the upper gallery, 1s “Mr Mohun's boxes” and “Mr Yeate's boxes,” represent the respective box-keepers I have

seen the same form of accounts in the old Haymarket pay-sheets "Mr —'s boxes"

One result of having "vast engines" and machines upon the stage to supply the "organs of sensual sight and sound" with food was, that the fine gentlemen who came behind the scenes were as much in the way as a visitor is in modern times during the run of a pantomime, and, further, as these noble patrons did not pay for their seats, the outlay on this new system required to be supplied in a more regular way All this was represented to His Majesty, who issued a decree that no one should go behind the scenes, and that everybody should pay at the doors But, it would appear, no attention was paid to his order

#### ORDER OF THE KING

Charles R Whereas complaint hath often been made unto Us that divers persons do rudely press, and with evil language and blows force their way into Our theatres (called the Theatre Royal in Bridges Street and the Duke's Theatre in Dorset Gardens) at the time of their public representations and actings without paying the price established at both the said theatres, to the great disturbance of Our servants licensed by Our authority as well as others, and to the danger of the public peace, Our will and pleasure therefore is, and We do hereby straightly charge and command, that no person of what quality soever do presume to come into either of the said theatres before and during the time of acting, and until the plays are quite finished, without paying the price established for the respective places And Our further command is, that the money which shall be paid so by any persons in their respective places shall not be returned again, after it is once paid, notwithstanding that such persons shall go out at any time before or during the play And (to avoid future fraud) that none hereafter shall enter the Pit, First, or Upper Gallery, without delivering to the respective doorkeepers the ticket or tickets which they received for their money paid at the first door

And foasmuch as 'tis impossible to command those

vast engines (which move the scenes and machines) and to order such a number of persons as must be employed in works of that nature, if any and such as belong thereunto be suffered to press in amongst them, Our will and command is that no person of what quality soever presume to stand or sit on the stages or to come within any part of the scenes before the play begins, while 'tis acting, or after 'tis ended, and we strictly here command our officers and guard of souldiers, which attend the respective theatres, to see this order exactly observed And if any person what soever shall disobey this our known pleasure and command, We shall proceed against them as contemners of Our royal authority and disturbers of the publick peace.

Given at our Court at Whitehall the 2nd day of February, in the 16th year of our reign, 1675

Mr Killigrew was now growing old, but so long as he lived he wished to retain his government of the Royal Theatre In the year before his death, in 1681, the directors of the other house had begun to make attempts of an underhanded kind to injure his establishment. They now began to tamper with his actors It will be recollect that there was a stringent covenant in the patents, the spirit of which was maintained up to the year 1820, that no deserter from one house should be received at the other against the consent of the first Dr Davenant and Mr Betterton contrived to seduce away Hart, the leader of the company, and Kynaston, but as they were prevented employing them at their house, agreed by a “memorandum” to pay them five shillings a day each for every acting day at the Duke's house, they were to make over any interest they had in the playhouse and its scenery, much of which appeared to belong to Hart, they were to engage to go to law with their manager, and make him pay what he owed them. But the whole of this extraordinary arrangement ought to be set out in full

**MEMORANDUM.**—It was then agreed upon between Dr Charles Davenant, Thomas Betterton, gent., and Willie Smith, gent., of the one part, and Charles Hart, gent., and Edward Kynaston, gent., on the other part, that the said Charles Davenant, Thomas Betterton, and Willie Smith, do pay, or cause to be paid, out of the profits of acting, unto Charles Hart and Edward Kynaston, five shillings apiece for every day there shall be any tragedies or comedies, or other representations, acted at the Duke's Theatre in Salisbury Court, wherever the company shall act during the respective lives of the said Charles Hart and Edward Kynaston, excepting on days the young men or young women play for their own profit only; but this agreement to cease if Charles Hart or Edward Kynaston shall at any time play among or effectually assist the King's company of actors; and for as long as this is paid they both covenant and promise not to play at the King's Theatre.

If Mr. Kynaston shall hereafter be free to act at the Duke's Theatre, this agreement with him, as to his pension, shall also cease.

Mr Hart and Mr. Kynaston do promise to make over, within a month after sealing of this, unto Charles Davenant, Thomas Betterton, and Willie Smith, all the right, title, and claim which they or either of them may have to any plays, books, clothes, and scenes, in the King's Playhouse

Mr Hart and Mr. Kynaston do also promise, within a month after the sealing hereof, to make over to the said Charles Davenant, Thomas Betterton, and Willie Smith, all the title which they each of them have to six and threepence apiece for every day there shall be any playing at the King's Theatre

Mr. Hart and Mr Kynaston do both also promise to promote with all their power and interest an agreement between both playhouses; and Mr. Kynaston for himself promises to endeavour as much as he can to get free that he may act at the Duke's Playhouse, but he is not obliged to play unless he have ten shillings per day allowed for his acting, and his pension then to cease.

Mr Hart and Mr Kynaston promise to go to law with

Mr Killigrew to have these articles performed, and are to be at the expense of the suit

In witness of this agreement all the parties have hereunto set their hands this 14th day of October, 1681

This arrangement, we are told, was considered by some to be “tricking and unfair.” The truth was, another negotiation was going on at the time, and they were trying by every art to force the Drury Lane managers to agree. But in justification it was urged that the two houses were then at war. Hart and Kynaston, it is said, continued faithful to this agreement, so highly profitable for them—they were to receive a salary without the trouble of acting, and thus contributed effectively to the ruin of the King’s house. Such is a curious little incident in theatrical history.

After a long struggle the contest had to end in 1682—not 1684, as Cibber says—with the well-known “Union of the Patents,” which marks a theatrical era. The immediate reasons given for this step were that the leading players of the Royal Theatre, Hart and Mohun, were now old and past their work, that the younger players, Goodman, Clark, and others, were getting impatient and eager to seize on their parts. There was also—most important of all—the falling off of the audiences. However these reasons may have affected its fortunes, it does not appear to have been noticed that, though the arrangement had been before contemplated, it was brought to a point by the death of Killigrew, the manager, which caused the immediate break-up of the concern. This royster ing old courtier, who had had such a chequered life, was in truth plunged in difficulties, out of which the expenses of a royal theatre were not likely to help him, this too in spite of all his patents, grants, monopolies—his son being appointed Master of the Revels, with “all houses, mansions, profits, rights,

liberties, and advantages<sup>1</sup> to the same belonging ”\* All his wife’s fortune, which was a considerable one for the times, she had covenanted should be duly settled on herself and her children, and it had been invested in houses. But after his death it was discovered that during his sickness “he had made away with this property by regular deed” The piteous appeal of the widowed Madam Killigrew to the King, asking for redress, is still to be read † No doubt this was in satisfaction of some pressing debts It was obvious that with such a manager the affairs of the theatre must have been hopelessly embarrassed, and, indeed, it would seem from the various papers as though the theatre had been pledged again and again in different interests, for the wife and children, as well as to those who had found the money to build it It would seem, too, that he had not carried out the arrangement he had made with his son, who had been obliged to obtain a decree of the Court of Chancery to compel him to do so ‡

Nor was this all. A year before the Duke’s house had tampered with the author of the establishment. This the managers discovered in 1679, and made direct complaint that Dryden had “faimed” himself to the rival company §

\* See grant in Brit Mus Ad MS

† Ibid

‡ Ibid It is difficult to determine exactly the character of the conflicting claims, but it is clear that the property was heavily encumbered

§ On Mr Dryden’s binding himself to write three plays a year, he was admitted and continued a sharer in the King’s Playhouse for divers years, and received for his share and a quarter 300*l* or 400*l* *communibus annis*, but though he received the monies we received not the plays, not one in a year After which, the house being burnt, the company, in building another, contracted great debt, so that the shares fell much short of what they were formerly; whereupon Mr D, complaining to the company of his want of profit, the company was so kind to him that they not only did not press him for the plays which he so engaged to write for them, and for which he was paid beforehand, but they did also, at his earnest request, give him a third day for his last new play, called “All for Love”, and at the receipt of the money of the said third day, he acknowledged it as a gift and a particular kindness of the company, yet, notwithstanding that kind proceeding, Mr D has now, jointly with Mr Lee (who was in pension with us to the last day of our playing

Indeed, before this time, Mr Dryden had troubles of his own to attend to. The year 1679, besides bringing the death of the veteran Wintersall, saw the increase of theatrical disorders. On December 23rd, Mr Dryden was set upon in Rose Street, Covent Garden, by three persons, who knocked him down and dangerously wounded him. It was supposed to have been “some feminine spite,” for a short time before a satire of his was handed about in MS., and the Duchess of Portsmouth and Lord Rochester are supposed to have set on the bravos. This was not unlikely when we consider other assaults of this kind. In the same year, we are told “On Monday night last happened a great disorder in the Duke’s playhouse, some gentlemen in their cups entering into the pit, flinging links at the actors, and using several reproachful speeches against the Duchess of Portsmouth and other persons of honour, which has occasioned a prohibition of acting till His Majesty’s further pleasure.”

Old Killigrew had died on March 19th, 1681, and no time was lost in making the arrangement, which was one of an extraordinary kind, and virtually amounted to the extinction

and shall continue), written a play called ‘*Oedipus*,’ and given it to the Duke’s company, contrary to his said agreement, his promise and all gratitude, to the great prejudice and almost undoing of the company, they being the only poets remaining to us. Mr Crowne, being under the like agreement with the Duke’s house, wrote a play called ‘*The Destruction of Jerusalem*,’ and being forced, by their refusal of it, to bring it to us, the said company compelled us, after the studying of it, and a vast expense in scenes and clothes, to buy up their claims, by paying all the pensions he had received from them, amounting to £127, paid by the King’s company, besides nearly £40 he the said Mr Crowne paid out of his own pocket. These things considered, if Mr D’s said agreement, promise, and monies, freely given him for his last said new play and his many titles we have to his writings, this play be purchased away from us, we must submit

“CHARLES KILLIGREW.  
CHARLES HART  
NIC BURT  
CARDALL GOODMAN  
MICH MOHUN”

of Drury Lane as a theatre It was solemnly agreed, on the 14th of May, between Mr. Charles Davenant, son to the late Sir William, with whom were joined two of his actors, Betterton and Smith ("who had some power or right," said the deed, under the late proprietor), and Mr Charles Killigrew, on the ground that it would be much more "convenient and beneficial" for the parties "that the patents should be united." The Union, however, it will be seen, amounted to an absorption of one house by its rival. All the plays of its *répertoire* were to be given over, and the owner within a week was to disperse the whole company. The two patents were to be considered as one, and the two patentees were to direct. If any difference should arise between them, it was to be referred to the three oldest actors of the company, who were to decide. Everything was to be transferred to the Dorset Gardens Theatre, with the exception of the "scenes and scene-rooms," in return for which a sum of 3*l* for each acting day was to be paid to Mr Killigrew, to be increased to 20*l* should there be any delay in carrying out the contract.

The Drury Lane patent, as we have seen, was charged with a sum of about 2000*l.*, and this sum Mr. Charles Killigrew discharged, as is set out in the deed of August 15th, 1682. No doubt the money was found by the "absorbing" patentee, and charged against the rent to Killigrew. It is characteristic of this spendthrift family, that within two years we find M<sup>r</sup> C Killigrew mortgaging his patent afresh for a sum of 389*l.*

The stage was certainly a gainer by the much-discussed union of an almost bankrupt house and a decaying company with the robust establishment at the Duke's. The next ten or fifteen years was one of the so-called "palmy" eras of Drury Lane Theatre, when legitimacy reigned, when good pieces were given, set off by the exertions of actors who played on the

truest principles. The corps consisted, to use the quaint form of the time

<i>Of Men.</i>	<i>Of Women</i>
Mr Betterton.	Mrs. Betterton.
Mr Montfoit.	Mrs. Barry
Mr Kynaston.	Mrs Leigh.
Mr Sandford.	Mrs. Butler
Mr Noakes	Mrs. Montfort, and
Mr Underhill, and	Mrs Bracegirdle
Mr Leigh	

This, indeed, may be considered the first general list of the Drury Lane school of actors, which, it will be seen, can readily be divided into four characteristic eras. The second was marked by such players as Booth, Cibber, Mrs Porter, Wilks, Dogget, and others. The third was formed by Garrick, and is quite distinguishable of its kind. The fourth, and last, by the players described by Charles Lamb—the Palmers, Dodds, Brinleys, Bannisters, Jordans, etc. All that followed has nothing distinctive, nothing that bore the *cachet* of a distinct school, the players not being bound to one theatre, while the great performers—Kemble, Siddons, Kean, Macready—were simply stars, and followed for their solitary attraction.

Having thus succeeded in their aim, the directors of the Duke's company, though they had extinguished that of the King's, moved now to the Theatre Royal,\* where they opened on November 16th, 1682. Mr. Dryden celebrated the occasion with an *à propos* prologue, in which he seemed to excuse the step taken on the ground of the intestine feuds.

The factious natives never could agree,  
Aiming, as they called it, to be free.  
Those playhouse Whigs set up for property,  
Some say they no obedience paid of late, etc

\* According to Downes, it actually became the King's company, and bore the name

Hart did not long reap the fruits of his desertion, as he died the following year. Indeed, by this time the old company had almost dissolved away. Lacy and Wintersall were dead, Bunt, Shatterell, and Mrs Marshall dead or retired. The mere *débris* was left.

#### ARTICLES OF UNION

14 May 1682 Inde from Chailes Killigrew to Charles Davenant Batterton and Smith reciting the Lres Pattents of 25<sup>o</sup> April 14<sup>o</sup> Car 2<sup>d</sup> to Tho Killigrew Esq and his heires and the power and authority thereby to him given to erect a theater or playhouse and reciteing that by vertue of and in pursuance of such power continued therien a theater was erected in or neare Covent Gaarden commonly called the King's Playhouse wherein have been playes frequently acted. And that Charles Killigrew then claymed the rightfull power and authority to dispose of the s<sup>d</sup> Lres Pattents and all advantages etc. And alsoe the 1ight of the s<sup>d</sup> theatei soe erected as afores<sup>d</sup> to dispose thereof att his pleasure. And reciteing alsoe his late Ma<sup>t</sup>s Grant or Lres Pattents dated the 15 January 14<sup>o</sup> of his reigne to Sr Wm Davenant and his heires to erect a playhouse in any place within the cittyes of London and Westmr or suburbs therieof. And in pursuance of the sayd last Lres Pattents one theater comonly called the Duke's Playhouse hath binne erected in or neare Dorsett Garden wherein playes are and have beene frequently acted for severall yearies past. And recyting that whereas the said Chailes Davenant then claymed the 1ightfull power and authority to dispose of the sayd Lres Pattents and all advantages & powers etc thereby granted. And the s<sup>d</sup> Batterton and Smith had some power or 1ight to the same from or vnder the said Sr William Davenant then lately dec<sup>d</sup> or by the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Davenant. And whereas vpon mature deliberacon and weighty consideracons had and taken by the said partyes that it would be much more convenient and beneficall for all ptyes concerned that all authorityes and priuiledges in and by the said Lres Pattents should be united therfore the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew doth theriby Covenant and agree with Charles Davenant that all the powers and authori-  
ties put in the 1<sup>st</sup> Lres Pattents should be joyned vntied with

the powers in the 2<sup>d</sup> Lres Pattents and from thence forth the same should be as one and soe for ever continued And it is mutually covenanted and agreed by and betweene all the partyes to these prsents that all playes as should then after be acted by vertue of the s<sup>d</sup> Pattents or either of them should be acted by the company then employed att the theater in Dorsett Garden called the Duke's Playhouse in such maner as by the said Charles Killigrew and Charles Davenant and their heires should be directed and appointed and not otherwise And soe as the said Charles Killigrew and Chailes Davenant their respective heires etc. did act manage and governe the same for the best advantage of all partyes concerned therein to their uttermost powers and judgements And Charles Killigrew covenants with Davenant that hee will procure the prsent company of players now belonging to and w<sup>ch</sup> have usually acted att the sayd Theater Royall within 6 dayes next after the date of the s<sup>d</sup> Indre to be wholly dispersed and dissolved and should within the same time deliver upp vnto the s<sup>d</sup> Chailes Davenant his heires or ass<sup>s</sup> for the joyst use and benefitt of him and them and of the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew his heires and ass<sup>s</sup> all the playes peiticularly menconed in a Schedule to the Indre annex To the intent all or any the said playes should be onely acted as the said Chailes Killigrew and Charles Davenant their respective heires and ass<sup>s</sup> should direct or appoint And the peaceable possession of the s<sup>d</sup> Theater Royall with the appertinnes except the scenes and scene roomes should be delivrd upp to the said Charles Davenant his heires and ass<sup>s</sup> to and for the sole use of the said vntied Lres Pattents And that the same should be then after from time to time held and employed for the acting of playes and entertainments of the stage when it shall be thought expedient and by such person and persons & company as shall be from time to time directed and appointed by them the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew and Charles Davenant their respective heires and ass<sup>s</sup> The s<sup>d</sup> Charles Davenant his heires and ass<sup>s</sup> yeilding and payeing for the same from the time of the delivering the possession thereof accordingly vnto the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew his heires and ass<sup>s</sup> the rent or sume of 3l. p. diem for every day wherein any play should be

publiquely acted att the s<sup>d</sup> Theater Royall and the sayd Duke's Theater or either of them or att any other place within the cityes of London and Westm<sup>r</sup> or suburbs thereof or otherwise in case att any time after the deliveing possession thereof the said Charles Davenant his heires or ass<sup>s</sup> or any persons then after to act there pursuant to the s<sup>d</sup> Agreement should be interrupted by any person or persons in the quitt enyoing of the same then the s<sup>d</sup> rent of 3l p. diem should be suspended vntill any such interrupcion should be removed In consideracion whereof Charles Davenant Thomas Batterton and William Smith doe covenant with the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew that the said two severall recited Pattents and the powers priviledges etc thereby granted & alising should from time to time remaine and be united and as one Pattent And that all matters and things then after to be acted and done pursuant to the Lres Pattents should be acted and done by the joyn্ত consent of the said Charles Killigrew and Chailes Davenant theirre respective heires and ass<sup>s</sup> (except onely as in such cases as are therein excepted) And that in case they the said Mr Killigrew and Mr Davenant should differr in any matter or thing to be done born or suffered concerning the premisses that then the same should be determined by 3 persons players that then should have the greatest share in the proffitt of acting and should have binn longest actors or the major pt. of them And likewise that there should be duely paid by the said Charles Davenant Batterton and Smith imediately from and after the dissolveing and disperseing of the persons then usually acting the Rll Theater the rent of 20s 6d p' diem vnto Charles Killigrew and his ass<sup>s</sup> for and dureing one whole yeare from thence next ensueing unleste the possession of the Rll Theater should be delivered upp vnto the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Davenant his heires and ass<sup>s</sup> before the end of the s<sup>d</sup> yeare And from and after the end thereof in case the possession should be then delivered put the true meaning of the said Deed or in case the possession thereof should be delivered before the end of the s<sup>d</sup> yeare Then the rent or sume of 3l. p diem should be paid vnto Charles Killigrew his heires or ass<sup>s</sup> for and dureing soe long time as from thence forth the s<sup>d</sup> Rll Theater should and might be held and enyoed for the purposes

in the saud Indre for every day wherein any play should be acted pursuant to the direccons of the s<sup>d</sup> Indre att the s<sup>d</sup> Theater Rll and the s<sup>d</sup> Duke's Theater or either of them or any other place in London or Westmr or the suburbs thereof And Charles Davenant Batterton and Smith and theirre heires doe thereby covenant with Charles Killigrew and his heires that from thenceforth for ever all the cleare proffitts of and by acting in the sa theaters or either of them or elsewhere after all chardges certeine and incident are p<sup>d</sup> and deducted that then after should be made by the s<sup>d</sup> united Pattents should be divided into 20 equall parts or shares and three whole parts or shares thereof should be from time to time imediately after dissolveing the s<sup>d</sup> Rll Company duely p<sup>d</sup> vnto the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew his heires exec<sup>r</sup>s and ass<sup>s</sup> except onely and in such case and dureing such time when the same should be suspended vyt one share and one halfe of a share to be paid to him or them for and vpon the acco<sup>t</sup> of the dissolveing of the s<sup>d</sup> company and transferring of the playes as aforesaid and for dischardgeing of seuerall debts amounting in the whole to 500l then lately contracted by the Rll Company And the other share and one halfe of a share to be paid to him and them in recompence of his and theirre right to the first Lies Pattents And to the intent that all the matters and things to be acted and done pursuant to the s<sup>d</sup> Indre about the premisses might more plainly appeare and be made manifest to the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew his heires and ass<sup>s</sup> whereby he might be satisfyed how much belongs to him for his 3 shares soe to be paid to him there should be Bookes of Acco<sup>t</sup>s kept for that purpose and wherein the receipts of the proffits might be entred and all chardges and expences from thence forth to be l . d\* out And that the s<sup>d</sup> 3 shares thereby declared . + elong to the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew his heires or ass<sup>s</sup> should be held enjoyed by him and them freed and dischardged of and from all incumbianc w<sup>t</sup>soever then done or suffered by any person or persons w<sup>t</sup>soever with a proviso<sup>e</sup> that there should be made advantage of surviv<sup>r</sup>shipp to fer or concerning any of the powers authorityes libertyes or benefitts

or other matter or thing therein mençoned and by the intent thereof to be held done or enjoyed by them the s<sup>d</sup> Charles Killigrew and Charles Davenant should be had or taken by them or either of them theire or either of theire heires or ass<sup>s</sup>

**Period the Second.**

**FROM THE UNION TO THE CIBBER-WILKS MANAGEMENT,  
1682-1709.**



## CHAPTER I.

### LICENCE AND BUFFOONING

THIS mixed company, as it was called, still keeping on the old house at Dorset Gardens, now started on its course, at first with great encouragement. They were but the remnant of the old King's company—Cartwright, Griffin, Goodman, Duke, Watson, Powell senior, Wiltshire, Mrs Corey, Mrs Bontell, Mrs Cook, and Mrs Montfort. Hart does not appear to have returned to the stage, while Mohun "survived not long after." This was believed to have been owing to mortification or disgust, but it is not very clear. Both were now veterans, and were no doubt glad to enjoy the convenient pensions that had been secured to them. Smith, too, another excellent actor, soon dropped away. Hart's merits seem to have been hardly sufficiently appreciated in the chronicles. Yet he appears to have been remarkable in style and character, suggesting the style of the late Mr Macready. He was grave, stately, almost "pedant in all that concerned the dignity of the stage," and in characters where weight and power and passion were required, such as Othello, Alexander, Amyntas in "The Maid's Tragedy," almost unsurpassed. "Towards the latter end of his acting, if he acted in any one of these but once a fortnight, the house was filled as at a new play, especially

Alexander, he acting that with such grandeur and agreeable majesty that one of the Court was pleased to honour him with this commendation, that Hart might teach any king on earth how to comport himself" Thus writes Mr. Downes, of his company. "What Mr Hart delivers," Rymer says, "every one takes upon content, their eyes are prepossessed and charmed by his action before aught of the poet's can approach their ears." This esteemed player, who had but 3*l.* a week salary, died in 1683, and a curious interest attaches to his memory He was the grandnephew of Shakespeare, and grandson of his sister Joan The grandson of this player was alive at Stratford about the beginning of the present century \*

Another player who was high in favour with the Merry Monarch was Lacy, who died in 1681 "Lacy," says Langbaine, "was a comedian whose abilities in action were sufficiently known to all that frequented the King's Theatre, where he was for many years an actor, and performed all parts that he undertook to a miracle, insomuch that I am apt to believe

\* William Shakspeare Hart An account of himself and family was communicated by him to Mr Reddell, bookseller, of Tewkesbury "My grandfather, Thomas Hart, was by trade a chairmaker, in Stratford upon-Avon He afterwards married, and became a dealer in cattle I remember, about twenty years ago, he sold the *back and bottom only* of Shakespeare's chair to a nobleman, who sent for it from abroad My father, John Hart, went on board an East Indiaman, when he was about fourteen years old, as captain's servant His father afterwards being desirous that he should learn a trade, he was placed apprentice to Mr Richardson, chairmaker, of Tewkesbury He died in 1800, in the forty-fifth year of his age He was buried at Tewkesbury, a stone being erected

In memory  
of JOHN HART,  
who died Jan 22, 1800  
(the sixth descendant from the poet  
Shakspeare),  
Aged 45 years

William Shakspeare Hart, son of the aforesaid John Hart, was born in Tewkesbury He now works as a journeyman He has no relic of Shakespeare's, except the cane, which was given to him by his grandfather, two days before he died, who valued it very much"

that as this age never had, so the next never will have his equal, at least not his superiour He was so well approved of by King Charles the Second, an undeniable judge in dramatick arts, that he caused his picture to be drawn in three several figures in the same table, viz that of Teague in ‘The Committee,’ Mr Scruple in ‘The Cheats,’ and M. Galliard in ‘The Variety,’ which piece is still in being in ‘Windsor Castle’ Nor did his talent wholly lie in acting ; he knew both how to judge and write plays, and if his comedies are somewhat allied to French farce, ’tis out of choice rather than want of ability to write true comedy” The King would call him his actor, just as George the Third called Quick his player

A most discreditable custom, which endured for eighty years, was introduced in this year A scandalous coarse piece, called “The London Cuckolds,” by Ravenscroft, was played at the Duke’s Theatre with great success in the year 1682 It was welcome, no doubt, to the King, and as its humour is described as “too low for anything above the rank of a chambermaid or a post-boy, with a story nothing more virtuous than a woman of the town could sit to see without a blush,” it seems to have grown into a custom that it should be performed every Lord Mayor’s Day, much as “George Barnwell” was selected for Boxing-night In 1709, Steele made protest against this custom in his “Tatler,” declaring that there was nothing he pitied so much as seeing respectable players compelled to utter and illustrate fitly such things , and so it continued until 1752, when Mr Garrick courageously omitted it

In truth, this seems associated with the free buffoonery then tolerated on the stage, which makes it surprising how anything orderly or decent could be carried on. A company, a member of which was the facetious Jo Hayns, and whose antics were of about the same character as those of a circus

clown, was not likely to be regulated by the strict discipline necessary for the proper maintenance of the legitimate drama. The mention of this droll, with whom the Merry Monarch used to entertain himself, suggests a little incident behind the scenes in which he was concerned, and will help us to a view of theatrical manners in those times. His life, it seems, was "all of a piece, he being a comedian both on and off the stage. In all his protean shapes, whether the plain Jo Hayns, the learned Dr Hayns, or the dignified Count Hayns—in all his disguises had more of the humorist than the impostor. His frauds were rather to be called his frolics" \* Hart, the player, whom we have been just considering, he made a special butt of, and was never tired of playing practical jokes at his expense.

"Joe," says Davies, "had persuaded a clergyman, into whose company he had introduced himself, that the players were a set of people who wished to be reformed, and that he could recommend him to be chaplain to the theatre, with a handsome yearly income, that he had nothing to do but to summon the company, by ringing a bell, to prayers every morning. This impudent trick was carried so far that the clergyman was introduced by Haines, with a bell in his hand, behind the scenes, which he frequently rang, and cried out audibly, 'Players! players! come to prayers!' While Joe and some of the actors were enjoying this happy contrivance, Hart came into the theatre, and, seeing the parson and his bell, soon found out the imposition. He was extremely angry with Haines, whom he smartly reprehended, and invited the clergyman to dine with him. He soon convinced him that Haines was an improper companion for a man of his function. So he went his way, but not so privately but that he was

\* "The Life of the late famous Comedian Jo Hayns, containing his 1701 comical exploits and adventures both at home and abroad."

taken notice of by several who had seen him come down the passage with his bell So that the jest was soon spread abroad, and at last came to King Charles's ears, who, being mightily taken with the contrivance, sent for Joe, who gave him an account of the whole business ”

Mr Hart had been much displeased with the discreditable issue of Joe's mission to France for the theatre, and had marked his displeasure by some severity. For this the facetious Jo determined to revenge himself, and played him this trick. One night, when the serious tragedy of “Catiline's Conspiracy” was being performed, which required a great number of senators, Mr Hart,

Being chief of the house, would oblige Jo to dress for one of these senators, although Jo's salary being then fifty shillings per week freed him from any such obligations But Mr Hart being, as I said before, sole governor of the playhouse, and at a small variance with Jo, commands it, and the other must obey Jo being vexed at the slight Mr Hart had put on him, found out this method of being revenged He gets a scaramouch dress, a large full ruff, makes himself whiskers from ear to ear, puts on his head a long merry-andrew's cap, a short pipe in his mouth, a little three-legged stool in his hand, and in this manner follows Mr Hart on the stage, sits himself down behind him, and begins to smoke his pipe, to laugh, and to point to him Which comical figure put all the house in an uproar, some laughing, some clapping, and some hollowing Now Mr Hart, as those that knew him can aver, was a man of that exactness and grandeur on the stage, that let what would happen, he would never discompose himself or mind anything but what he then represented, and had a scene fallen behind him, he would not at that time have looked back to see what was the matter, which Jo knowing remained still smoking, the audience continued laughing, Mr Hart acting and wondering at this unusual occasion of their mirth, sometimes thinking it some disturbance in the house, again, that it might be something amiss in his dress, at last, turning himself towards the

scenes, he discovered Jo in the aforesaid posture, whereupon he immediately goes off the stage, swearing he would never set foot on it again unless Jo was immediately turned out of doors, which was no sooner spoke but put into practice

These incidents were significant, and prove a certain demoralisation But again

Jo Hayns narrowly escaped being seized and sent to Bastile for personating an English peer and running three thousand livies in debt in Paris. A couple of bailiffs seized him in an action of 20*l* as the Bishop of Ely was passing by in his coach Quoth Jo to the bailiffs "Gentlemen, here's my cousin the bishop going into his house, let me but speak to him and he'll pay the debt and the charges." The bailiffs thought they might venture this, as they were within three or four yards of him. So up goes Jo to the coach, pulling off his hat, and got close to it The bishop ordered the coach to stop, while Jo, close to his ear, said softly "My lord, here are two poor men who have such great scruples of conscience that I fear they'll hang themselves" "Very well," said the bishop, so calling the bailiffs he said "You two men come to me to-morrow morning, and I'll satisfy you." The men bowed and went away, Jo (hugging himself with his fallacious device) went also his way In the morning the bailiffs, expecting the debt and charges, repaired to the bishop's, where, being introduced "Well," said the bishop, "what are your scruples of conscience?" "Scruples?" said the bailiffs, "we have no scruples; we are bailiffs, my lord, who yesterday arrested your cousin, Jo Hayns, for 20*l* We hope your lordship will be as good as your word" The bishop, reflecting that his name and honour would be exposed if he complied not, paid the debt and charges.

He spoke an epilogue "on an ass," and there is a curious etching of the scene It may be given as a specimen of the freedom indulged in by such buffoons "Epilogue, written by

Tom Brown, and spoken by Jo Haines, in the habit of an horse-officer, mounted on an ass

“ You have seen (before now) since this *shape-showing* age,  
*More asses than mine*, on a *beau-crowded* stage,  
Wherefore by *th’ example* of fam’d *Dogget*, my *Brother*,  
To shew *our* stage has *asses*, as well as the other,  
For *indeed*, as *I’m told*, pray let me not *wrong ye*,  
*My ass* has *relations*, and *great ones among ye*,  
*In the galleries, side-boxes*, on the *stage*, in the *pit*,  
What’s your *critick*, your *beau*, your *keeper*, your *wit?*”

It may be added, in some vindication of this “ droll,” that Shuter and Liston were later to condescend to the same familiarity and spoke epilogues, mounted on asses.

## CHAPTER II.

### DEATH OF CHARLES THE SECOND.

WE now approach the first of these Drury Lane "revolts," which were to be so often repeated later. It will be seen that as the rivals were now amalgamated, there was a dramatic monopoly in force, at whose mercy both the town and the actors were placed. The actors had no other place to act in but at one house; and the town had but one house where they could see plays. Further, so large an operation as the union of two theatres could not be carried out without capital, which was supplied by the leading shareholders from the Dorset Gardens. "Shares of the patentees," says Cibber, "were promiscuously sold out to money-making persons called adventurers, who, though utterly ignorant of theatrical affairs, were still admitted to a proportionate vote in the management of them"\*. These directors, we are told, only thought of dividends, holding ten shares out of twenty into which the property was divided, and considered that all "practical

\* We may hesitate to accept this account of the "adventurers," as stated in the text, these being no doubt the original partners, and not a fresh creation of shareholders.

encouragement to actors" was so much deducted from the profits of the venture. This "encouragement" would seem to have taken the shape of occasional gratifications of a sum of twenty or even fifty pounds to a favourite actor on some extraordinary success—a system of *douceurs*, in fact, not very wholesome in principle. Twenty years later some of the shares of the theatre were held by Lord Guilford, Dame Brownlow, Lord T. Harvey, Sir Edward Smith, and other persons, who no doubt represented the families of the original adventurers in Dorset Gardens, and it does seem that these were mere speculators, sleeping partners, greedy for money. It seems more probable that the direction remained with Mr. Davenant, a man of little theatrical taste, and who had deserted the stage for legal and political pursuits. Charles Killigrew, if he was allowed to interfere much in the direction, was, as we have seen, an embarrassed man; so that the one lacking means, and both sympathy, there was a want of harmony between the management and the company.

It was stated that another reason for discord was the claim of Betterton, a partner in the venture, and who from his high reputation and influence, as well as from his being the chief attraction at the theatre, naturally considered that his suggestions should be considered. The real grievance would, however, seem to have been that the lay direction, or shareholders, received half the profits, whereas later, as Cibber points out, three of the leading actors had two-thirds of all the profits divided among them. This would seem to have been unreasonable, as the shareholders had found the money in that proportion. Cibber, who joined the company in 1690, seems to rest entirely on this pecuniary grievance, complaining of "those ten taskmasters," and of the "drones in the

theatrical hive," who thus oppressed the working actors, and of the "heavy establishment" under which the united company groaned. This then seems to show that the grievance was that the actors were not sufficiently considered in proportion to the services they rendered.

There was now a growing discontent. Betterton, who had many friends among the nobility and gentry, no doubt felt himself encouraged and supported in his remonstrances. It is plain too that the undertaking was labouring under serious money embarrassments, and that the directors, who were losing by it, were obliged to curtail their expenses in every way.

One glimpse here of the conventional customs held sacred by actors, often laughed at, which seem now ridiculous. Such was the Forest of Feathers alluded to in "Hamlet," "which were," as Davies says, "those large plumes of feathers which the old actors wore on their heads in characters of heroism and dignity. This practice was adopted at the Restoration, and continued in force till Mr Garrick's era of management. His superior taste got rid of the incumbrance."

Such, too, were the enormous full-bottomed periwigs flowing over back and shoulders. This was but the dress off the stage, and was adopted from the French, indeed, Molière's plays are thus costumed at the Français. Davies was told that Wilks and Booth often gave forty guineas for a wig. Murderers and villains were accustomed to disguise themselves in coarse large black wigs, and whiten and distort their features to impart terror. The murderer's outside was thus as black as his heart, which corresponded to his sentiments. It was thought that Hamlet's direction to the players "Leave thy damnable faces and begin," pointed to this. "I have

seen,'" says Davies, "Hippisley act the first Murderer in 'Macbeth'; his face was made pale with chalk, distinguished with large whiskers and a long black wig" This is often seen, too, in country theatres "No joke," Davies continues, "ever raised such loud and repeated mirth, in the galleries, as Sir John's labour in getting the body of Hotspur on his back. If Hotspur and Falstaff had been on ill terms, or any quarrel had taken place between them, the hero, if he were so inclined, could have teased the fat knight in such a manner as to have given him no little vexation How Booth and Harper managed this pantomimic scene is not very easy to tell Booth's weight and roundness of figure would render the bulky Harper's lifting him on his back worse than walking a hundred yards on uneven ground Quin had little or no difficulty in perching Garrick upon his shoulders, who looked like a dwarf on the back of a giant But oh! how he tugged and toiled to raise Barry from the ground! At length this upper-gallery merriment was done away by the difficulties which Henderson encountered in getting Smith on his shoulders. So much time was consumed in this pick-a-back business, that the spectators grew tired, or rather disgusted It was thought best, for the future, that some of Falstaff's ragamuffins should bear off the dead body."

But we turn from this freedom to a more pleasing theme. The pathetic piece of "Venice Preserved," produced in 1682, in which, as Dryden says, "the passions are truly touched, and nature is there which is the greatest beauty," one would scarcely expect to be a vehicle for political rancour. It is defaced by some scenes in the worst taste, and which have been long omitted, to the benefit of the play In the prologue the author states plainly that he intended political

allusion, and Derrick, says the author of “*The Dramatic Censor*” in 1752, writes “I have omitted, in my progress, to take any notice of the scenes between Aquilina, the courtesan, and the old senator, Antonio, as they are a disgrace to the piece. They are said to have been written by direction of Charles the Second to satirise the Earl of Shaftesbury, father (grandfather) to the noble author of the ‘*Characteristics*.’” The writer was a vehement partisan of the Duke of York, and Lord Shaftesbury as ardent an opponent. The character and the original have the same name—“Antony.” It was curious that George the Second should have ordered these coarse scenes to be restored, and which used, indeed, to be played by Penkethman up to 1720 with great gusto. But the audience would not bear them.

There now followed a span of thirteen years, during which the united company performed. This period was remarkable, as we have seen, for the production of some touching and highly poetical plays, and whose favourable reception illustrates that curious and contradictory relish of virtue by the vicious which is so often found among audiences. At this time, too, a fierce contest was raging between the Whigs and Tories on the exclusion of the Duke of York and other political questions, and the stage was made to reflect the controversy in the most open fashion. Shadwell and others caused their heroes to utter speeches about liberty, the constitution, tyranny, etc., while Dryden, Dufey, and Otway lashed their opponents in the most personal style. Nor were the poets restrained by the presence of the King from making offensive allusions to his brother. As the King himself had not been spared, this was scarcely surprising.

But now the revels of the Restoration were to close, and the

twenty-five years' orgie to end. In 1685 the merry patron of the drama and of all that was diverting passed away. The news of his death was a shock to at least one member of the theatrical world. Crowne, a playwright of the day, having grown tired of his dramatic life, had recently asked him for a place at Court, which the good-natured King readily promised, on the terms that he should write one more piece. He even put into his hands a Spanish comedy, the plot of which he bade him "adapt." It was written, put in rehearsal, but on the last day before performance he met Underhill the player coming away from the theatre, and sharply rebuked him for leaving his post. "Oh, we are all undone!" said the first. "How?" said the other, "is the playhouse on fire?" "The whole nation," was the reply, "will quickly be so, for the King is dead." The poet was nearly distracted at the inopportune destruction of all his prospects.\*

King Chailes did not much relish Shakespeare, who, during the first ten years of the Restoration, was put aside almost altogether in favour of Beaumont and Fletcher and other writers. When the public began to call for his works, and in the occasional pieces of the day there are many satirical allusions to this neglect, the device was found of vamping up or adapting plays, to which labour such eminent hands as Durfey, Dryden, and others applied themselves diligently. Another plan for making them attractive was the turning them into operas by the aid of music, machines, dancing, etc., and with successful results. Molière and Shakespeare thus suffered in company. But he was more partial to the French model of

\* Balzac tells of an author of his day, to whom something as disastrous occurred. Half starved, and with a family, he had for years besieged the theatres, and at last succeeded in getting his piece accepted. Coming to Paris with his belongings, the night or two before the performance, he was driven past the theatre, which was in flames!

pieces, which the fashionable playmakers were not slow to gratify.

It is usual to associate the memory of James the Second with all that is ascetical and gloomy, but this opinion has long been in course of revision. In the loose school of his brothers he had learned to enjoy the stage, and it is to him that the player is said to owe a very important privilege.

In the actor's ear no sound has a more gratifying melody than the word "benefit." This pleasant arrangement, when a single player takes all the profits of the night, is said to have originated in 1687, with Mrs Barry—the more famous one—owing to the favour of His Majesty. But this origin seems to be a mistaken one, as we find Mr. Pepys, in 1668, telling how Knipp came to him about the "woman's day" at the play-house, which was fixed, and which he was expected to patronise to increase their profits.

Benefits can only flourish when there is an organised company of players, with equal claims, who can obtain the support of private persons. When there is, as exists now, the "star" system, to the lavishly-paid leading actor the benefit becomes scarcely an object, and brings but little profit. There is no doubt, however, that the benefits did not become formally recognised till the players fell into distress, owing to the oppression of the managers and others, and who thus found a mode of supplying their necessities.

There is recorded a highly significant story of the King's visit to Oxford, an event celebrated by plays which the King's actors went down specially to perform. Obadiah Walker, the Principal of University College, had, it will be remembered, incurred odium for adopting the King's religion. "In the latter end of the comedy called 'The Committee,'

Leigh, who acted the part of Teague, hauling in Obadiah with an halter about his neck, whom, according to his written part, he was to threaten to hang, for no better reason than his refusing to drink the King's health, here Leigh, to justify his purpose with a stronger provocation, put himself into a more than ordinary heat with his captive Obadiah, which having heightened his master's curiosity to know what Obadiah had done to deserve such usage, Leigh, folding his arms, with a ridiculous stare of astonishment, replied 'Upon my shoul, he has shange his religion' As the merit of this jest lay chiefly in the auditors' sudden application of it to the Obadiah of Oxford, it was received with all the triumph of applause which the zeal of a different religion could inspire But Leigh was given to understand that the King was highly displeased at it, inasmuch as it had shown him that the university was in a temper to make a jest of his proselyte."

That a common player should have taken such a liberty might have shown the King how precarious was his situation.

It should be mentioned that one important privilege of the honourable slavery enjoyed by the comedians of the royal theatres was protection from arrest. In 1696, we find that one Brown, a bailiff, had ventured to take into custody Mr. Freeman, of Lincoln's Inn Fields Playhouse, "one of the King's servants." On appeal to the Lord Chamberlain, Brown was himself arrested for the contempt, and was only released on making "humble submission" to his lordship. It would be interesting to know when this valuable privilege fell into abeyance It suggests the protection enjoyed by ambassadors' servants, and in discussing the question of the Chamberlain's jurisdiction, which so embarrasses lawyers to account for, this

case, with which there is much analogy, should not be lost sight of.

When the popular "Fair Penitent" was produced, a droll scene occurred on the stage, which reads as though it was some country theatre fifty years ago Mr Chetwood had it from that stage chronicle, Mr. John Bowman.\* "Lothario, after he is killed by Altamont in the fourth act, lies dead by proxy in the fifth, raised on a bier covered with black by the property-man, and the face whitened by the barber, the coat and periwig generally filled by one of the dressers Most of the capital actors in the established theatres have generally a dresser to themselves, though they are paid by the manager, to be ready on all occasions for stage guards, attendance, etc. Mr Powel played Lothario, and one Warren, his dresser, claimed a right of lying for his master, and performing the dead part of Lothario, which he proposed to act to the best advantage, though Powel was ignorant of the matter. The fifth act began, and went on as usual with applause, but about the middle of the distressful scene Powel called aloud for his man Warren, who as loudly replied from the bier on the stage, 'Here, sir' Powel, as I said before, being ignorant of the part his man was doing, repeated, without loss of time, 'Come here this moment, you ——, or I'll break all the bones in your skin.' Warren knew his hasty temper, therefore, without any reply, jumped off with all his sables about him, which, unfortunately, were tied fast to the handles of the bier and dragged after him But this was not all, the laugh and roar began in the audience, till it frightened poor Warren so much, that, with the bier at his tail, he threw down Calista

\* Bowman was indeed a veteran, and last of the Bettertonian school, acting till he was eighty years old He began to play in 1673 and continued to act till 1735

(Mrs. Barry) and overwhelmed her with the table, lamp, book, bones, together with all the lumber of the charnel-house ; he tugged till he broke off his trammels and made his escape , and the play for once ended with immoderate fits of laughter, even the grave Mr. Betterton

“ Smiled in the tumult and enjoyed the storm.”

## CHAPTER III.

### THE DRAMATISTS OF THE RESTORATION.

ON the coming to the throne of William the Third there was, as may be imagined, some awkwardness in the case of the actors who had cast their lot with the late King, and whose appearance on the stage was likely to be the signal for disturbance or opposition—a difficulty that occurred in France in the case of an actress who had been a Bonapartist. Smith, a well-known actor, Chetwood tells us, “was zealously attached to the interest of King James the Second, and served in his army as a volunteer with two servants. After the abdication Mr. Smith returned to the theatre, by the persuasion of many friends and the desire of the town, who admired his performance. The first character he chose to appear in was that of Wilmore in ‘The Rover;’ but being informed that he should be maltreated on account of his principles, he gave orders for the curtain to drop if any disturbance should come from the audience. Accordingly, the play began in the utmost tranquillity, but when Mr. Smith entered in the fifth act the storm began with the usual noise upon such occasions (an uproar not unknown to all frequenters of theatres, and by time mightily improved by a particular set that delight in that agreeable harmony, as pleasing to the ear as a sow-gelder’s

horn, that sets all the village curs to imitate the sound), Mr. Smith gave the signal, the curtain dropped, and the audience dismissed No persuasions could prevail upon him to appear on the stage again, till that great poet, Mr Congreve, had wrote his comedy of ‘Love for Love,’ which was in the year 1695, more than three years void from the above accident He took his station in many plays afterwards for, I think, three years He died of a cold occasioned by a violent fit of the cramp , for when he was first seized he threw himself out of bed, and remained there so long before the cramp left him (in that naked condition), that a cold fell upon his lungs, a fever ensued, and death released him in three days after ”

But a more curious incident of this kind of embarrassment took place on the occasion of the Queen’s visit to the theatre A play of Dryden’s, called “The Spanish Friar,” was revived It had been a favourite of King Charles, who had said in his odd way, when it was objected that it was stolen “ Gad’s fish ! steal me such another play, any of you, and I’ll frequent it as much as I do ‘The Spanish Friar ’ ”

The play itself was an illustration of the use made of the stage for political purposes, as the friar and the allusion made to his mode of life were all turned against the Duke of York. It is obvious, as in the case of Cibber’s “Nonjuror,” that where an opponent has the power of painting his enemy his touchings cannot be faithful, and therefore an unfair prejudice is likely to be the result. This should not be obtained from what is meant to entertain all. Hence the need of a licenser. King William was away in Ireland, and the Queen unthinkingly commanded it one night A letter, written by Daniel Finch, second Earl of Nottingham, to a person of fashion (a copy of which was in the possession of Dr. Percy some years ago), describes the scene “The only day Her Majesty gave herself the diversion of a play happened to be ‘The Spanish Fryar,’ ”

the only play forbid by the late King. Some unhappy expressions, amongst which those that follow, put her into the greatest disorder, and frequently forced her to hold up her fan, and often look behind and call for her palatine and hood, or anything she could think of, whilst those who were in the pit before her constantly turned their heads over their shoulders to see how she bore the application of what was said In one place, where the Queen of Arragon is going to church in procession, it is said, by a spectator

Very good ! she usurps the throne,  
Keeps the old King in prison, and, at the same time,  
Is praying for a blessing on the army.

Again :

'T is observ'd at Court who weeps, and who wears black,  
For good King Sancho's death.

Again

Who is it that can flatter a Court like this ?  
Can I soothe tyranny ? seem pleased to see my Royal  
Master  
Murder'd, his crown usurp'd—a distaff on the throne ?  
What title has this Queen but lawless force ? and force  
Must pull her down.

“ Twenty more things were said in the play, which faction applied to the Queen ; and though it never could be originally intended, it furnished the town with talk till something else happened.”

The legacy left by the Merry Monarch to the social life of his successors was a tide of debauched literature, redeemed, indeed, by a certain amount of wit, but which seemed almost the fruit of competition. There is not space here to enter fully on the question of the Drama of the Restoration, which has already engaged many a brilliant writer, but it is remarkable

that it should only have been endured for a generation, and at the first honest and vigorous onslaught, led by a simple clergyman, the tide of indecency should have been stayed.

Lord Macaulay, in his admirable view of the comic dramatists of the Restoration, attributes the revolting indecency of the era during which they wrote to a sort of rebound from the preceding Puritan strictness. This is, no doubt, accountable for some of the licence, but the real cause was the influence of a debauched Court, practically beyond the control of public opinion, the stage and its writers being completely dependent on the Court. Similarly he attributes the licence of the French Regency and Louis XV to a reaction from the pious exercises and enforced Puritanism that marked the last years of the Grand Monarque. But this change could be accounted for. The two Courts were despotic, and had the power of setting the fashion in whichever way they pleased. The bulk of the nation had little to do with the stage, and were not affected by it.

All readers of taste know the ingenious vindication offered by Charles Lamb, thought by some to be a mere jesting speculation, but in which he was quite in earnest. For the licentious characters of these plays he thus argues

They seem engaged in the proper element. They break through no laws, or conscientious restraints. They know of none. They have got out of Christendom into the land—what shall I call it?—of cuckoldry—the Utopia of gallantry, where pleasure is duty, and the manners perfect freedom. It is altogether a speculative scene of things, which has no reference whatever to the world that is. No good person can be justly offended as a spectator, because no good person suffers on the stage. Judged morally, every character in these plays—the few exceptions only are *mistakes*—is alike essentially vain and worthless. When we are among them, we are amongst a chaotic people. We are not to judge them by

our usages. No reverend institutions are insulted by their proceedings, for they have none among them. No peace of families is violated, for no family ties exist among them. No deep affections are disquieted, no holy wedlock bands are snapped, etc.

One always has a sympathy with the theories of the amiable "Elia," but here he was giving way to his fondness for his "Midnight Darlings," as he called his folios. Leigh Hunt takes much the same view and extenuates this grossness. But Lord Macaulay has demolished these any cobwebs with blunt logic and pitiless vigour. As he shows clearly, the conventional world of the stage was the same as the *real world* off it, the hero being "exactly the fine gentleman whom every youth in the pit would gladly resemble." Then the moral code, spoken of by Lamb, is unfortunately not confined, as he seemed to think, to the dramatic world and left there. "It is, on the contrary, a code actually received and obeyed by great numbers of people. We need not go to Utopia to find them." Hence the scandalous example worked real and deadly mischief. The highest point of indecency was, it is admitted, reached by Wycherly, whose strange life was scarcely out of harmony. He makes one of the six gentlemen who wrote successfully for the stage. He changed his religion in France, and changed back again when he came to London. He was patronised by, and owed his advancement to the degrading favour of the King's favourite, the Duchess of Cleveland. In 1675 was produced his "Country Wife," which Macaulay styles "the most profligate and heartless of human compositions," a work which, altered and purified by Garrick with amazing taste and success, has entertained thousands\*

"The Plain Dealer," another truly great work, was per-

\* As a personal experience, I may be allowed to add, that of all comedies I have witnessed none appeared more amusing, more genuine, or more original.

formed in 1677. But all the events in his course seem to take a dramatic complexion, and were like scenes in a play.

"Mr Wycherly," says the younger Cibber, "happened to be ill of a fever at his lodgings in Bow Street, Covent Garden. During his sickness the King did him the honour of a visit, when, finding his fever indeed abated, but his body extremely weakened, and his spirits miserably shattered, he commanded him to take a journey to the south of France, believing that nothing could contribute more to the restoring his former state of health than the gentle air of Montpelier during the winter season, at the same time the King assured him that, as soon as he was able to undertake the journey, he would order five hundred pounds to be paid him to defray the expenses of it."

"Soon after this promise of His Majesty's, Mr Dennis tells us that Mr Wycherly went down to Tunbridge, to take either the benefit of the waters or the diversions of the place, when, walking one day upon the Wells-walk with his friend, Mr Fairbeard, of Gray's Inn, just as he came up to the bookseller's, the Countess of Diogeda, a young widow, rich, noble, and beautiful, came up to the bookseller and inquired for 'The Plain Dealer.' 'Madam,' says Mr Fairbeard, 'since you are for "The Plain Dealer," there he is for you,' pushing Mr. Wycherly towards her. 'Yes,' says Mr. Wycherly, 'this lady can bear plain-dealing, for she appears to be so accomplished, that what would be a compliment to others, when said to her would be plain-dealing.' 'No, truly, sir,' said the lady, 'I am not without my faults more than the rest of my sex, and yet, notwithstanding all my faults, I love plain dealing, and am never more fond of it than when it tells me of a fault.' 'Then, madam,' says Mr Fairbeard, 'you and the plain dealer seem designed by heaven for each other.' In short, Mr. Wycherly accompanied her upon the walks, waited upon her home, visited her daily at her lodgings whilst she stayed at Tunbridge; and after she went to London at her lodgings in Hatton Garden, where, in a little time, he obtained her consent to marry her. This he did, by his father's command, without acquainting the King, for it was reasonably supposed, that the lady's having

a great independent estate, and noble and powerful relations, the acquainting the King with the intended match would be the likeliest way to prevent it. As soon as the news was known at Court, it was looked upon as an affront to the King and a contempt of His Majesty's orders, and Mr Wycherly's conduct after marriage made the resentment fall heavier upon him, for being conscious he had given offence, and seldom going near the Court, his absence was construed into ingratitude

“The Countess, though a splendid wife, was not formed to make a husband happy, she was in her nature extremely jealous, and indulged in it to such a degree, that she could not endure her husband should be one moment out of her sight. Their lodgings were in Bow Street, Covent Garden, over against the Cock Tavern, whither, if Mr. Wycherly at any time went, he was obliged to leave the windows open, that his lady might see there was no woman in the company”

This jealous lady did not live many years, and, meaning to leave him her fortune, left him only a lawsuit He was thrown into the Fleet for debt, and was refused a loan of 20/ by his bookseller. James the Second, now come to the throne, went afterwards to see his comedy, “The Plain Dealer.” He was so delighted with it that he inquired after the author, gave him a pension, and paid his debts Lord Macaulay attempts, without the slightest authority, to connect this act of benevolence with Wycherly's fresh reconversion, but James unfortunately combined with his religious zeal a corresponding laxity of life, which is sufficient to explain the transaction From this time to his death, we are told, he led that most wretched of lives, “the life of a vicious old boy about town” When he was seized with his last illness, to spite his heir, he determined to marry. This he did, at the age of seventy-five. He survived till 1715.

This is not a review of the dramatists of this era, but the figure of the jovial humorous Farquhar—Captain Farquhar—is conspicuous, and cannot be passed over. His comedy, “The Beaux's Stratagem,” is full of the freshest humour, and if acted

at all respectably, must entertain There is nothing more exhilarating, and the characters and incidents come back on us with a perpetual pleasure We find ourselves thinking with a smile of Scrub, and the presumed London servant whom he so admires It is extraordinary how Goldsmith later caught the same freshness of handling in "She Stoops to Conquer" Such broad treatment is essential in true comedy, and will be found in all the great writers from Molière downwards Nowdays a more trifling local treatment is in vogue, and the other style is scarcely appreciated \* The poor author's career was short, jovial, and unfortunate He had "the advantage of a good person," we are told, and was acting on the stage for a time, which he was obliged to leave owing to his having nearly put out the eye of a fellow-actor in a fencing bout Mr Wilks was his faithful friend There was something touching in the incidents of the close of his life, while his great comedy was in the flush of success "He wrote it," says Chetwood, who had the account from Wilks, "in six weeks, with a settled illness all the time. He perceived the approaches of death before he had finished the last act, and, as he had often foretold, died before the run of the play was over It was affirmed by some of his near acquaintance, his unfortunate marriage shortened his days, for his wife (by whom he had two daughters), through the reputation of a great fortune, tricked him into matrimony. This was chiefly the fault of her love, which was so violent that she was resolved to use all arts to gain him Though some husbands in such a case would have proved mere husbands, but he was so much charmed with her love and understanding, that he lived very happy with her Therefore, when I say an unfortunate marriage, with other circumstances, conduced to

\* This great comedy suggested to Johnson a criticism on Garrick's playing of Archer—viz the actor's not letting the gentleman break through the footman This is surely masterly, and reveals, for both actor and writer, quite a new and true mode of interpretation

the shortening of his days, I only mean that his fortune being too slender to support a family, led him into a great many cares and inconveniences, for I have often heard him say (Mr. Wilks's own words) 'That it was more pain to him in imagining that his family might want a needful support than the most violent death that could be inflicted on him' He was a person of infinite humour, as I have been informed, even in his last indisposition He died in the run of 'The Stratagem' Mr Wilks often visited him in his illness In one of these visits Mr Wilks told Mr Farquhar that Mrs. Oldfield thought he had dealt too freely with the character of Mrs Sullen, in giving her to Archer without a proper divorce, which was not a security for her honour 'To salve that,' replied the author, 'I'll get a real divorce, marry her myself, and give her my bond she shall be a real widow in less than a fortnight' While Mr Farquhar was in Trinity College, Dublin, he sent to a gentleman to borrow Burnet's 'History of the Reformation,' but the gentleman sent him word he never lent any book out of his chamber, but if he would come there, he should make use of it as long as he pleased A little while after, the owner of the book sent to borrow Mr Farquhar's bellows He returned him the compliment 'I never lend my bellows out of my own chamber, but if he pleased to come there he should make use of them as long as he would' When he expired, Mr Wilks took care to bury him decently in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields Among his papers he found this short note

DEAR BOB,

I have not anything to leave thee to perpetuate my memory but two helpless girls Look upon them sometimes, and think of him that was to the last moments of his life,—

Thine,

G. FARQUHAR.

Even the two last lines he ever wrote seemed to be playing with words,

Death now appears to seize my latest breath,  
But all my miseries will end in death

Mr. Farquhar attempted to play the part of Sir Harry Wildair for his own benefit, as I am informed from a gentleman that saw him in this kingdom, which answered his design, in gaining a crowded audience, but he executed the part so lamely, as an actor, that his friends were ashamed for him. Thus we see a good poet make but an indifferent actor."

No official account could be so effective as this simple and pathetic story given by one of his friends \*

It is remarkable, indeed, that during Charles the Second's reign no less than eight writers of distinction could be named—the Duke of Buckingham, Sir George Etherege, Dryden, Lee, Otway, Wycherly, Shadwell, and Crowne—who were all gentlemen by birth. One of the real "fine" gentlemen of the Court—that is to say, one who was gay, and declared to have been not nearly so licentious as the rest—was Sir George Etherege. He, in 1676, produced a comedy, in which was sketched the fashionable coxcomb of the day, and was said to have copied Lord Rochester. It was curious to find this personality, or "studying from life," so common in the age, but it must be said that every successful delineator of character does so consciously or unconsciously. The merely literal copyist, however, fails. The very description of his piece, "The Man of Mode," given at the Duke's Theatre, has an air

\* One of the most wonderful instances of Macaulay's sagacity or instinct was shown in connection with one of Farquhar's plays. It had long been assumed that Addison had ill-naturedly glanced at Steele under the title of "Little Dickey." It seemed to Macaulay, however, that some comedian was intended. On a stall one day he picked up Chetwood, and the very first page he opened showed him "Little Dickey" Norris or "Jubilee Dickey," who got the name from Farquhar's piece, "The Constant Couple."

of comedy. "Everyone has heard of Sir Fopling Flutter. The characters in the play are strongly marked, the plot is agreeably conducted, and the dialogue truly polite and elegant. The character of Dormant is perhaps the only completely fine gentleman that has ever yet been brought on the English stage, at the same time that in that of Sir Fopling (designed from Beau Hewitt) may be traced the groundwork of almost all the Foppingtons and *petit-maitres* which appeared in the succeeding comedies of that period. It is said that Sir George has drawn young Bellair from his own character." Dennis, the critic, declared that it shines as our first genteel comedy, the touches are natural and delicate, and never overcharged. Unfortunately, the tone of the most fashionable people was extremely indelicate, and he then proceeds to anticipate Leigh Hunt's defence—that you would not be true to the age unless its indelicacy was also represented in connection with this subject of the ladies of the Court.

From the year 1671 to the end of the century, we shall find the sort of dramatic sewage that poured across the stage was swelled by diligent contributions from Mrs Aphra Behn. A score of plays attest her diligence and her unsavoury, unfeminine nature. Of more interest, however, was her curious and adventurous career. When a girl she was taken to the West Indies, where she became intimately acquainted with the Prince Oronoko, whose story was to furnish her with a novel, and Southern with his pathetic play. She attracted the notice of King Charles the Second, who was said to have sent her, as his agent, to Antwerp, to carry out a diplomatic intrigue. We are told that, in the latter end of 1666, she, by means of the influence she had over one Vander Albert, a Dutchman of eminence, wormed out of him the design formed by De Ruyter, of sailing up the Thames and burning the English ships in their harbours.

She was greatly sought at Antwerp by various Flemish admirers, and at last Mynheer Van Albert promised to marry her, but he was carried off by a fever. She then returned to England, and we are told devoted her life entirely to pleasure and the Muses. Her wit gained her the admiration of men like Dryden and Southern, while her good looks did the same of another class of admirers. Of her talents it has been written “In all, even the most indifferent of her pieces, there are strong marks of genius and understanding. Her plots are full of business and ingenuity, and her dialogue sparkles with the dazzling lustre of genuine wit, which everywhere glitters among it. But then she has been accused, and that not without great justice, of interlarding her comedies with the most indecent scenes, and giving an indulgence in her wit to the most indecorous expressions.” While an indulgent female friend of congenial tastes thus summed up her character in the following terms. “She was (says this lady) of a generous, humane disposition, something passionate, very serviceable to her friends in all that was in her power, and could sooner forgive an injury than do one. She had wit, humour, good-nature, and judgment, she was mistress of all the pleasing arts of conversation, she was a woman of sense, and consequently a lover of pleasure. For my part, I knew her intimately, and never saw aught unbecoming the just modesty of our sex, though more gay and free than the folly of the precise will allow.” After a life intermingled with numerous disappointments, and in the close of a long indisposition, she died on the 16th April, 1689, and lies interred in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, under a blue marble stone, with the inscription :

MRS. APHRA BEHN, died April the 16th, 1689

Here lies a proof that wit can never be  
Defence enough against mortality.

This has at least the merit of candour. A return, indeed, of all the ladies of easy manners that have found a place in the great abbey would be an astonishing one. There are but few female dramatists, perhaps not half-a-dozen, and of these but three, perhaps, are remembered. Mrs. Centlivre, whose "Wonder," "The Bold Stroke for a Wife," and "The Busybody" take the first rank in English comedy. "The Busybody" is delightful. Mrs. Cowley and her "Belle's Stratagem" and Mrs. Behn seem to exhaust the list, for the pieces of Hannah More, Joanna Baillie, Mrs. Sheridan, and Mrs Inchbald are not remembered.

An excellent criticism by Hartley Coleridge points to the defect not of Congreve merely but of Sheridan. "That diligent selection and considerate collocation of words, that tight-lacing of sentences into symmetry, that exquisite propriety of each part and particle of the whole, which make 'The Way of the World' so perfect a model of acuminated satire, detract more from scenic illusion than they add to histrionic effect. The dialogue of this play is no more akin to actual conversation than the quick step of an opera-dancer to the haste of pursuit or terror. No actor could give it the unpremeditated air of common speech. But there is another and more serious obstacle to the success of 'The Way of the World' as an acting play. It has no moral interest. There is no one person in the *dramatis personæ* for whom it is possible to care. Vice may be, and too often has been, made interesting, but cold-hearted, unprincipled villainy never can. The conduct of every character is so thoroughly and so equally contemptible, that, however you suspend the moral codes of judgment, you cannot sympathise in the success, or exult in the defeat, of any."

It is lamentable to think of such a crowd of persons of

and befouling of all that was pure or reflected in the divine image, opening the very flood-gates of the sewers. But with the reign of William came signs of wholesome restraint, which were encouraging to decorous writers, and a remarkable book, now about to be published, caused an instant reform, and led to a crisis of the stage.

The appearance in 1698 of Jeremy Collier's famous work, "A Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage," marks an era. It directed attention and gave form to what had long been in everyone's mind. This gentleman had been preacher at Gray's Inn,\* but his book, or series of books, is certainly a most damaging indictment, not consisting of declamation or argument, but stored with an abundance of facts and instances that spoke for themselves. His case was that the stage was a school for immodesty, for cursing and swearing, abuse of religion and Scripture, and these charges he supported by numerous quotations from "The Old Bachelor," "The Double Dealer," "Mark Antony," "The Orphan," and all the most popular pieces of the day. Libertines, he said, were invariably made the "top character," and given success. He was replied to by Congreve, Vanbrugh, and others, who each attempted a defence of their plays, but with only indifferent success. The case was too clear. Vanbrugh, in a pleasant little brochure, "A Vindication of his Comedy, 'The Relapse,'" attempted to dispose of his opponent by pleasant raillery, but had little more to offer. The famous work written by the uncompromising clergyman deserves the high praise given to it, in its vivacity, spirit of raillery, and even humour, it certainly deserves Macaulay's praise. "To compare Collier with Pascal would, indeed, be

\* He was a nonjuring bishop in 1713, and died in 1722. He wrote a number of books on the same subject—"Further Vindication of the Short View," 1708, "A Defence of the Short View," 1705, "A Second Defence," etc.

absurd, yet we hardly know where, except in the ‘Provincial Letters,’ we can find mirth so harmoniously and becomingly blended with solemnity as in the ‘Short View.’ In truth, all the modes of ridicule, from broad fun to polished and antithetical sarcasm, were at Collier’s command. . . . It is surprising to see how gallantly the solitary outlaw advances to attack his enemies, distributing his swashing blows right and left among Wycherly, Congreve, Vanbrugh, treads the wretched Durfey down in the dirt beneath his feet, and strikes with all his strength full at the towering strength of Dryden.” It was singular and perhaps creditable to him also that Dryden made no response, and later owned that he could only offer his repentance for the scandal he had given. Congreve’s reply was reckoned heavy\* The result of the controversy was truly extraordinary. A single book achieved the victory. The writers did not dare to purvey this vile garbage any longer to the public “A new race of wits and poets arose, who generally treated with reverence the great ties which bind society together, and whose very indecencies were decent compared with those of the school which flourished before them” The name of Collier, a worthy, truly honourable man, who suffered for his conscience, deserves higher reputation than it has received.

A practical result of all this was at once shown in the strict supervision of what was done upon the stage, and we are told, though I have not been able to find authority for the statement, that Mrs. Bracegirdle, and even the respectable Betterton, were prosecuted and fined for “using profane and indecent expressions” in their characters We may be sure that William and his Queen were not indisposed to exercise this wholesome restraint And it is said that he showed

\* I have a copy of Vanbrugh’s bitter reply, and it can only be described as

indulgence to Colher—a Jacobite—for the service he had done. Some change had been attempted, even in the first year of the reign, though not attended with much success, for an advertisement gave notice that the players were not in favour. On April 4th, 1689, this was issued “These are to give notice, that all stage-players, mountebanks, rope-dancers, and others, who show motions and strange sights, do repair to Charles Killigrew, Esq., Master of the Revels, at his office at Somerset House, to renew their licences, the former being void, and that none do presume to make any public show in town or country without a new licence from the said Master of the Revels” (It will be remembered that his father held the same office.)

But any wholesome results were not to be looked for at once, and the town was soon startled by the deed of violence which led to the death of the actor Mountfort. This player had been, curiously enough, entertained, as a sort of jester, in the family of Jefferies, and used to furnish amusement at City dinners. Sir John Reresby tells us “At an entertainment of the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen in the year 1685, called for Mr Mountfort to divert the company (as his lordship was pleased to term it) he being an excellent mimic, my lord made him plead before him in a feigned cause, in which he aped all the lawyers of the age in their tone of voice, and in their action and gesture of body, to the very great ridicule, not only of the lawyers, but of the law itself, which to me did not seem altogether prudent in a man of his lofty station in the law diverting it certainly was, but prudent in the Lord High Chancellor I shall never think it.” One is inclined to concur heartily with the chroniclers.

It was under the government of Killigrew that this strange incident occurred, which has furnished a chapter to the romance of the stage. It has often been told, but

it deserves a place here as belonging to the history of Drury Lane It is the story of a very young and interesting actor, who was assassinated in the street

Lord Mohun, a man of free character and rancorous spirit, had contracted a great intimacy with one Captain Hill, a man of scandalous and despicable life, and was so fond of this fellow that he entered into his schemes, and became a party in promoting his most criminal pleasures Hill had long admired Mrs Bracegirdle, the celebrated actress, who treated him with disdain He conceived that her aversion must proceed from having previously engaged her heart, and he became jealous of an actor called Mountfort, probably from no other reason than the respect with which he observed Mr Mountfort invariably treated her, and their frequently playing together in the same scene

Confirmed in this suspicion, he resolved to be revenged, and determined to have recourse to violence, and hired some ruffians to assist him in carrying her off His chief accomplice in this scheme was Lord Mohun They appointed an evening for that purpose (December 9th, 1692), *hired a number of soldiers* and a coach, and went to the playhouse in order to find Mrs Bracegirdle, but she, taking no part in the play that night, did not come They then got intelligence that she was gone with her mother, to sup at one Mrs Page's, in Drury Lane. Thither they went, and took their stations in expectation of Mrs. Bracegirdle's coming out.

She at last made her appearance, accompanied by her mother and Mr. Page The two ruffians made a sign to their hired bravos, who laid their hands on Mrs Bracegirdle; but her mother, who threw her arms round her waist, preventing them from thrusting her immediately into the coach, and Mr Page gaining time to call assistance, their attempt was frustrated, and Mrs. Bracegirdle, her mother, and Mr. Page were safely

conveyed to her own house in Howard Street, in the Strand. Lord Mohun and Hill, enraged at this disappointment, resolved, since they were unsuccessful in one part of their design, they would yet attempt another, and that night vowed revenge against Mr. Mountfort. They went to the street where he lived, and there lay in wait for him. Mrs Bracegirdle and another gentlewoman, who had heard them vow revenge against Mr. Mountfort, sent to his house to desire his wife to let him know his danger, and to warn him not to come home that night; but, unluckily, no messenger Mrs Mountfort sent was able to find him. Captain Hill and Lord Mohun paraded the streets with their swords drawn, and when the watch made inquiry into the cause of this, Lord Mohun answered that he was a peer of the realm, and dared them to touch him at their peril. The night-officers, being intimidated at this threat, left them unmolested, and went their rounds.

Towards midnight, Mr Mountfort, going home to his own house, was saluted, in a very friendly manner, by Lord Mohun, and as his lordship seemed to carry no mark of resentment in his behaviour, he made free to ask him how he came there at that time of night. To which his lordship replied, by asking if he had not heard of the affair of the woman. Mountfort asked, "What woman?" to which he answered, "Mrs Bracegirdle." "I hope," says he, "my lord, you do not encourage Mr Hill in his attempt upon Mrs Bracegirdle, which, however, is no concern of mine." When he uttered these words, Hill came behind his back, gave him some desperate blows on his head, and, before Mr Mountfort had time to draw his sword and stand on his defence, he run him through the body and made his escape.\* The

\* "The Stage Veteran," however, relates the following. "It was remembered by old actors as a tradition current sixty years ago, that the motive for the murder of Mountfort was not jealousy of Mrs Bracegirdle's attachment to him, but revenge for his having gained and betrayed the affections of a lady of exceedingly high rank in this county, and that one of the children whom Mis-

alarm of murder being given, the constable seized Lord Mohun, who, upon hearing that Hill had escaped, expressed great satisfaction, and said he did not care if he were hanged for him. When the evidences were examined at Hick's Hall, one Mr. Bencroft, who attended Mr. Mountfort, swore that Mr Mountfort declared to him, as a dying man, that, while he was talking to Lord Mohun, Hill struck him with his left hand, and with his right ran him through the body, before he had time to draw his sword. Lord Mohun was tried and acquitted by his peers, as it did not appear that he immediately assisted Hill in perpetrating the murder, or that they had concerted it before; for, though they were heard to vow revenge against Mountfort, the word "murder" was never mentioned. Besides his extraordinary talents as an actor, which we have seen won the praise of Cibber, he was the author of some dramas of merit.

The actor was in the thirty-third year of his age. The body was interred in the churchyard of St Clement Danes. He was stabbed on the 9th, and languished till the 12th. Lysons heard from Horace Walpole that Mr Shorter, father to Sir Robert Walpole's first wife, was walking down Norfolk Street, just before the assassination, when Lord Mohun, mistaking him for the actor, came up, and embracing him, said "Dear Mountfort——" Mr. Shorter undeceived him, and walked home; he was scarcely got to his house, which was in Norfolk Street, when he heard a noise and scuffle. Mr. Dutton Cook, in "Hours with the Players," has vindicated Lord Mohun, and a little controversy arose between him and a writer in "The Athenæum" as to the correct spelling of the actor's name, which is found as Montfort, Mountfort,

Mountfort brought up as her own, was in fact the fruits of the amour in question That child was living in 1730 Yet Cibber, who speaks at length of Mountfort, does not allude to it

Mountford, etc. The truth is that there was no certainty of spelling for such names. It was the sound that formed the name. We find Garrick spelt Garwick, Cibber, Cyber, Lacy, Lecy.

The whole incident offers a strange illustration of the manners of the time. Here, again, as in the case of Sir T. Coventry, we find soldiers employed to do bravos' work. But this was only a single experience of what was associated with stage amusements; and as the nobles who patronised them required that their vices should be reflected on the boards, so they seemed to think that all connected with the stage should be complaisant to their humours. Langbaine, the critic, declares that "he once saw a real tragedy in the pit of Drury Lane Theatre, where Mr Scrope received a mortal wound from Sir T Armstrong, and died presently after being removed to a house opposite the theatre."

## CHAPTER IV.

### RIVAL THEATRES.

MEANWHILE the actors were growing more and more discontented, when an unlooked-for remedy came to deliver them. This was no other than the concession of a new patent or licence for playing at another theatre.

Cibber again shall take up the story “From this consideration, then, several persons of the highest distinction espoused their cause, and sometimes, in the circle, entertained the King with the state of the theatre. At length their grievances were laid before the Earl of Dorset, then Lord Chamberlain, who took the most effectual method for their relief. But while this affair was in agitation Queen Mary died, which of course occasioned a cessation of all public diversions. In this melancholy interim, Betterton and his adherents had more leisure to solicit their redress ; and the patentees now finding that the party against them was gathering strength, were reduced to make sure of as good a company as the leavings of Betterton’s interest could form, and these, you may be sure, would not lose this occasion of setting a price upon their merit, equal to their own opinion of it, which was but just double to what they had before. Powell

were now raised each of them to four pounds, and others in proportion, as for myself, I was then too insignificant to be taken into their councils, and consequently stood among those of little importance, like cattle in a market, to be sold to the first bidder. But the patentees, seeming in the greatest distress for actors, condescended to purchase me. Thus, without any further merit than that of being a scarce commodity, I was advanced to thirty shillings a week, yet our company was so far from being full, that our commanders were forced to beat up for volunteers in several distant counties, it was this occasion that first brought Johnson and Bullock to the service of the Theatre Royal.

"Forces being thus raised, and the war declared on both sides, Betterton and his chiefs had the honour of an audience of the King, who considered them as the only subjects whom he had not yet delivered from arbitrary power, and graciously dismissed them with an assurance of relief and support." Accordingly a select number of them were empowered by his royal licence to act in a separate theatre for themselves. It was said indeed that the King took great interest in the scheme, and was curious to see and speak with Betterton, having a great admiration for him. The point was of course raised as to whether the patent was not in *perpetuum*, and to the exclusion of all other theatres. But the lawyers, on being consulted, declared that the Sovereign was not to be bound by any act of his predecessor. The point was to be raised again in more formal shape, some nineteen years later, where we shall consider it.\* "This great point being obtained, many

Steele, in his "Theatre," later on, quotes these opinions of counsel learned in the law. "This matter will appear as it ought to do, by the opinions of Pemberton, Northey, and Parker, who have been consulted by the successors of Davenant and Kiligrew."

"Quære 1.—'Whether the grant of a power to A. B. his heirs and assigns, by the Letters Patent, to erect a theatre, and to act plays, etc., be a good grant in

people of quality came into a voluntary subscription of twenty, and some of forty guineas apiece, for the erection of a theatre within the walls of a tennis-court, in Lincoln's Inn Fields. But as it required time to fit it up, it gave the patentees more leisure to muster their forces, who notwithstanding were not able to take the field till the Easter Monday in April following. Their first attempt was a revived play, called "Abdelazar, or the Moor's Revenge," poorly written, by Mrs Behn. The house was very full, but whether it was the play, or the actors, that were not approved, the next day's audience sunk to nothing. However, we were assured that, let the audience be never so low, our masters would make good all deficiencies, and so indeed they did, until the end of the season, when dues to balance came thick upon them." The pleasant Downes tells us how the permissions were secured " Betterton, Bairy, and Bracegurdle appealed to Lord Dorset, and, assisted by Sir R. Howard, procured a separate licence for Congreve, Betterton, Bracegurdle, Bairy, and others to set up a new company, calling it 'the New Theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields,' and the house, being fitted up for a tennis-court, opened the last day of April with 'Love for Love,' written by Mr. Congreve. This comedy was superior in success to

fee and assignable, or shall determine with King Charles the Second's death?"

" Quære — 'About the words, To be servants to the King and Queen, and to be servants to the Duke of York'?

" 1—I do not see that to act plays, or interludes, or operas, is unlawful in itself, either by the common law or by any statute. It is true, to wander about from country to country, as stage players, is forbid by 39 Eliz c 4, but not the acting of plays, etc., which may be used (for aught I see) as an innocent recreation.

" 2—I think the King's Patent may be available, to give the better countenance to the entertainments, and so may be transferred from ancestor to heir, or assigned for that purpose

" 3—For that purpose, to give a countenance or reputation to these play-houses, I think it may be effectual, after the death of King Charles the Second, and the Patent, I think, did not die," etc.

most of the precedent plays This comedy being extraordinarily well acted, chiefly the part of Ben the Sailor, I took thirteen days successively ”

We now turn to the affairs of the old theatre, which had been gradually growing into worse and worse confusion. A crafty and powerful opposition was gradually making its way and securing control through undermining the proper authority. Nothing seemed to “ draw,” even pieces of the most costly spectacular kind.

“ Though the success of ‘The Prophetess’ and ‘King Arthur’ (two dramatic operas, in which the patentees had embarked all their hopes) was, in appearance, very great, yet their whole receipts did not so far balance their expenses as to keep them out of a large debt, which it was publicly known was about this time contracted, and which found work for the Court of Chancery for about twenty years following, till one side of the cause grew weary When it became necessary, therefore, to lessen the charge, a resolution was taken to begin with the salaries of the actors; and what seemed to make this resolution more necessary at this time was the loss of Noakes, Montfort, and Leigh, who all died about the same year But the patentees, it seems, thought the surer way to remedy this distress was to bring down their pay in proportion to the fall of their audiences To make this project more feasible, they proposed to begin at the head of them, rightly judging that if the principals acquiesced, their inferiors would murmur in vain To bring this about with a better grace, they, under pretence of bringing younger actors forward, ordered several of Betterton’s and Mrs Barry’s chief parts to be given to young Powell and Miss Bracegirdle In this they committed palpable error, for while the best actors are in health, and still on the stage, the public is always apt to be out of

humour when those of a lower class pretend to stand in their places. But this proceeding, however, was warning enough to make Betterton be upon his guard, and to alarm others with apprehensions of their own safety, from the design that was laid against him. Betterton, upon this, drew into his party most of the valuable actors, who, to secure their unity, entered with him into a sort of association to stand or fall together. All this the patentees for some time slighted; but when matters drew towards a crisis, they found it advisable to take the same measures, and accordingly opened an association on their part, both of which were severally signed, as the interest or inclination of either side led them.

"During these contentions, which the impolitic patentees had raised against themselves (not only by this I have mentioned, but by many other grievances, which my memory retains not), the actors offered a treaty of peace, but their masters, imagining no consequence could shake the right of their authority, refused all terms of accommodation. In the meantime, this dissension was so prejudicial to their daily affairs, that I remember it was allowed by both parties that before Christmas the patent had lost the getting of at least a thousand pounds by it"\*

All these, no doubt, contributed, but it will be seen that what more directly led to the secession was the tyranny and unpopularity of one administrator. Some twenty years later, Charles Killigrew was complaining sorely that "Dr Davenant and those claiming under him have for the greater part of the time taken on them the sole government." The person who claimed under him was Alexander Davenant, to whom Dr. Davenant, on August 30th, 1687, had assigned his patent. On March 24th of the following year, Alexander sold it to

\* "Apology," ch vi

Christopher Rich. It will be seen presently that this well-known unpopular personage was the real oppressor of the actors.

Now with all this "screwing" and cheapening of the actors, one would have fancied that the management was making money. Mr Cibber, as we have seen, represents them as suffering a series of steady losses. But this pleasant writer is not always very accurate, and he is confuted by the declaration of the patentees themselves, who, in a petition\* dated some years earlier, submitted that "they had enjoyed it quietly till about Lady Day, 1695, their clear profits, after all expenses, amounting, one year with another, to 1000*l*†.

Cibber, therefore, seems to have been misinformed as to the great losses incurred.

The managers, still carrying on the struggle with their actors, were most unpopular with their company. But it was the coming to power of the new director that had the most prejudicial effect upon their mutual relations, and was now to figure conspicuously in the theatrical troubles. He was a lawyer, and presumed to be litigious and quarrelsome. A "critic," in a dialogue of the times, sketches him "*Critic*. In the other house there's an old snarling lawyer master and sovereign, a waspish, ignorant pettifogger in law and poetry; one who understands poetry no more than algebra, he would sooner have the grace of God than do everybody justice. What a pox has he to do so far out of his way? Can't he pore over his Plowden and Dalton, and let Fletcher and Beaumont alone? —*Sull* Well, good language, however, Mr. Critic. But besides, your exception's naught, that gentleman is not

\* Petition, 1709. British Museum.

† Petition of Lord Guilford and others, 1709. *Ibid*.

sovereign, as you call him.—*Crit.* No ! Pray who is ?—  
*Sull.* A gentleman of superior quality, and a gentleman of  
 good sense —*Crit.* I know whom you mean, and I grant he  
 has a share in the patent, but not any in the management of  
 the house, for I tell you, the other is monarch of the stage,  
 though he knows not how to govern one province in his  
 dominion, but that of signing, sealing, and something else that  
 shall be nameless ”

The competition now set in with great spirit and energy  
 Young Colley Cibber, a mere beginner at the old house,  
 describes the course of the contest

After we had stolen some few days' march upon them, the forces of Betterton came up with us in terrible order In about three weeks following the new theatre was opened against us, with a veteran company, and a new train of artillery , or, in plainer English, the old actors, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, began with a new comedy of Mr Congreve's, called “Love for Love,” produced on the 30th of April, 1695, which ran on with such extraordinary success, that they had seldom occasion to act any other play till the end of the season. This valuable play had a narrow escape from falling into the hands of the patentees , for, before the division of the company, it had been read and accepted of at the Theatre Royal , but while the articles of agreement for it were preparing, the rupture in the theatrical state was so far advanced that the author took time to pause before he signed them ; when finding that all hopes of accommodation were impracticable, he thought it advisable to let it take its fortune with those actors for whom he had first intended the parts.

Mr Congreve was then in such high reputation as an author, that, besides his profits from this play, they offered him a whole share with them, which he accepted , and in consideration of which he obliged himself, if his health permitted, to give them one new play every year. Dryden, in King

Charles's time, had the same share with the King's company, but he bound himself to give them two plays every season. This, you may imagine, he could not hold long, and, I am apt to think, he might have served them better with one in a year, not so hastily written Mr Congreve, whatever impediment he met with, was three years before, in pursuance to his agreement, he produced "The Mourning Bride," and, if I mistake not, the interval had been much the same, when he gave them "The Way of the World"

The principal new plays that succeeded from April, 1695, to the year 1704, were "Lovers' Luck," a comedy wrote by Captain Dilks, which filled the house six days together, and above 50l the eighth, the day it was left off "The Mourning Bride," a tragedy, wrote by Mr Congreve, had such success that it continued acting uninterruptedly thirteen days together "Boadicea, the British Queen," wrote by Mr Hopkins, it was a well writ play, in an Ovidian style in verse, it was liked and got the company money "Heroic Love," wrote by Mr. George Grenvil, superlatively written, a very good tragedy, well acted, and mightly pleased the Court and city. "The Anatomist, or Sham Doctor," had prosperous success, and remains a living play to this day. "The She Gallants," a comedy wrote by Mr. G. Grenvil when he was very young extraordinary witty and well acted, but offending the ears of some ladies, it made its exit "Justice Busy," a comedy wrote by Mr Crown, it was well acted, yet proved not a living play However, Mrs Bracegirdle, by a potent and magnetic charm in performing a song, caused the stones of the streets to fly in the men's faces. "The Way of the World," a comedy, wrote by Mr Congreve, it was curiously acted, Madam Bracegirdle performing her part so exactly and just, gained the applause of Court and city, and being too keen a satire, had not the success the company expected "The Ambitious Stepmother," "Tamerlane," "The Fair Penitent" (by Rowe), a very good play for three acts, but failing in the two last, answered not their expectations. "The Biter," a farce (by the same), it had a six days' run, the six days running it out of breath, it sickened and expired. "Abra-Mule" These being all the chiefest new plays that have been acted by Mr Betterton's

company since its separation from Mr. Rich in the year 1695. The names of several of the actors I have not mentioned or offered to your view, as in the others, by reason the late acting of them makes them live in your memories. Note—In the space of ten years past, Mr Betterton, to gratify the desires and fancies of the nobility and gentry, procured from abroad the best dancers and singers, as Monsieur L'Abbé, Madame Sublini, Monsieur Balen, Margarita Delpine, Maria Gallia, and divers others, who being exorbitantly expensive, produced small profit to him and his company, but vast gain to themselves. Madame Delpine, since her arrival in England, by modest computation, having got by the stage and gentry above ten thousand guineas.

But the truth was, “the affairs of the patentees were still in a very creeping condition; they were now, too late, convinced of their error in having provoked their people to this civil war of the theatre, quite changed, and dismal, now, was the prospect before them, their houses thin, and the town crowding into a new one; actors at double salaries, and not half the usual audiences to pay them” “The disproportion,” says the author of “The Comparison,” “was so great at parting, that it was almost impossible in Drury Lane to muster up a sufficient number to take in all the parts of any play, and of them so few were tolerable, that a play must of necessity be damned that had not extraordinary favour from the audience. No fewer than sixteen (most of the old standing) went away, and with them the very beauty and vigour of the stage; they who were left behind being for the most part learners, boys and girls, a very unequal match for them who revolted.”

Cibber did not join in this desertion, but remained to chronicle what went on at the Royal Theatre. Tony Ashton, a grotesque, of whom more later, testifies that there was at

least another actor of repute faithful among faithless found, and who remained loyal on principle. This was Sandford, thus quaintly described as "a proper person to discharge Jago, Foresight, and Ma'hnny in 'The Villain.' He would not join with Nevill from Drury Lane, but said 'This is my agreement—To Samuel Sandford, gentleman, three score shillings a week' 'Pho! pho!' said Mr Betterton, 'three pounds a week' 'No, no,' said Sandford, 'to Samuel Sandford, gentleman, three score shillings a week.' For which Cave Underhill, who was a quarter sharer, would often jeer Sandford, saying. 'Samuel Sandford, gent, my man' 'So, you sot,' said Sandford To which the other ever replied 'Samuel Sandford, my man Samuel'"

The new theatre, like several of the old theatres, remained standing in Clare Market, Vere Street, within living memory, till on its site later were erected the china works of Spode and Copeland. But a more extraordinary memorial still exists, carrying out its pristine function, viz the old Black Jack Tavern, close to Clare Market. Overhanging the street and supported on pillars, this quaint-looking drinking-house was much frequented by the Lincoln's Inn Fields actors, and notably by Mr Joseph Miller, of jest-book memory. The streets here are twisted and tortuous, and the whole is a singular specimen of survival, with its crazy tenements, neglect, and squalor, and all close to the civilised Strand.

We can quite picture the natural confusion and disorder that would arise on the opening of a playhouse in such a locality, and are prepared for the protest made by the orderly inhabitants in this year of 1695, who complained of being disturbed by the coaches and visitors, and moved the Court of King's Bench for a prohibition to restrain the company from acting. A rule was actually obtained, cause was shown,

and further time granted, but the company still acted. Nor could the new Lincoln's Inn Fields house boast much of its discipline. It started with the fairest prospects, and with that rare aid to the fortunes of a new house, a successful piece, whose success was worthy of its merits. Congreve's admirable comedy, "Love for Love," set off by the excellent acting of Dogget in *Foresight*, might have secured the fortunes of a less favoured enterprise. "You know," says Mr Rambler, in the dialogue before quoted, "the new house opened with an extraordinary good comedy, the like has scarce been heard of." "I allow," answers the Critic, "that play contributed not a little to their reputation and profit; it was the work of a popular author, but that was not all. The town was engaged in its favour, and in favour of the actors, long before the play was acted." "The good humour," adds Mr. Sullen, "that their noble patrons were in, gave that comedy such infinite applause and what the quality approve the lower sort take upon trust."\* Cibber adds that, "though success poured in so fast upon them at the first opening, that everything seemed to support itself, yet experience in a year or two showed them that they had never been worse governed than when they governed themselves." They were indeed a commonwealth. In this condition of rivalry, the elements of a broad and dignified policy were wanting on both sides; and the two houses soon condescended to acts that were only worthy of competing tradesmen in the same street. An instance of these tactics is thus related by Mr Cibber. At Drury Lane they had announced "Hamlet," and the rival house did the same.

But be that as it may, when, in their Monday's bills it was seen that "Hamlet" was up against us, our consternation was terrible, to find that so hopeful a project was frustrated. In this distress, Powell, who was our commanding officer, and

\* "Comparison between the two Stages."

whose enterprising head wanted nothing but skill to carry him through the most desperate attempts, for, like others of his craft, he had murdered many a hero, only to get into his clothes. This Powell, I say, immediately called a council of war, where the question was, whether he should fairly face the enemy, or make a retreat to some other play of more probable safety? It was soon resolved that to act "Hamlet" against "Hamlet" would be certainly throwing away the play, and disgracing themselves to little or no audience, to conclude, Powell, who was vain enough to envy Betterton as his rival, proposed to change plays with them, and that, as they had given out "The Old Batchelor," and had changed it for "Hamlet," against us, we should give up our "Hamlet" and turn "The Old Batchelor" upon them. This motion was agreed to, *nemine contradicente*, but upon inquiry it was found that there were not two persons among them who had acted in that play, but that objection, it seems (though all the parts were to be studied in six hours), was soon got over; Powell had an equivalent, *in petto*, that would balance any deficiency on that score, which was, that he would play the Old Batchelor himself, and mimic Betterton throughout the whole part. Accordingly, the bills were changed, and at the bottom inserted, "The part of the Old Batchelor to be performed in imitation of the original." Printed books of the play were sent for in haste, and every actor had one, to pick out of it the part he had, to conclude, the curiosity to see Betterton mimicked drew us a pretty good audience, and Powell (as far as applause is a proof of it) was allowed to have burlesqued him very well.

One result of this success was the encouragement of vanity and jealousies in particular members; "and though some deference might be had to the measures and advice of Betterton, several of them wanted to govern in their turn; and were often out of humour that their opinion was not equally regarded. But have we not seen the same infirmity in senates? The tragedians seemed to think their rank as much above the comedians as in the characters they severally acted."

There was even a ludicrous jealousy as to dresses, the comedians resenting the outlay on fine clothes for the tragedies, which Dogget, an admirable actor, was weak enough to resent in an extraordinary manner, “and the late reputation which Dogget had acquired from acting his Ben, in ‘Love for Love,’ made him a more declared malcontent on such occasions, he over-valued comedy for its being nearer to nature than tragedy, which is allowed to say many fine things that nature never spoke, in the same words, and supposing his opinion were just, yet he should have considered that the public had a taste as well as himself” Were this æsthetic reason his sole one, it were possible to sympathise with him, but it was reasonably suspected that he looked on the concern “as a sinking ship not only from the melancholy abatement of their profits, but likewise from the neglect and disorder of their government.” But this mercurial actor, who is brought to our recollection every year by the waterman’s race on the Thames, was by-and-by to give some further proofs of his uncertain temper

There was evidence, however, that sound dramatic principles were at work in the old house at Drury Lane. The new recruits worked hard, and it was soon found that “the mushrooms in Drury Lane shoot up from such a desolate fortune into a considerable name, and not only grappled with their rivals, but almost eclipsed them” It was noted that they took care to act everything “as well as they could”—no bad rule for securing success They also showed an excellent instinct in the choice of their comedies, for it was during the early stage of this contention that Cibber’s “Love’s Last Shift” and Vanbrugh’s capital pieces, “The Relapse” and “The Provoked Husband,” were furnished to the English drama. The era that saw such contributions could not be considered barren. It was scarcely surprising that these tactics should have given ~~them the advantage~~ and that “the audience, being in a little

time sated with the novelty of the new house, returned in shoals to the old ”\*

The new house, being burdened with the heavy charges of starting, alteration, decoration, etc., soon began to be hampered for means to carry on with, and in these straits applied to their noble patrons for aid. “ We know what importuning and dunning the noblemen there was, what flattering and what promising there was, till at length the encouragement they received by liberal contributions set them in a condition to go on † Thus, then, the two rivals traversed each other with uncertain fortune, this sometimes up, and that sometimes down, so that it was hard to say which was most like to prevail And by this time the town, not being able to furnish our two good audiences every day, changed their inclinations for the two houses, as they found themselves inclined to comedy or tragedy If they desired a tragedy, they went to Lincoln’s Inn Fields, if to comedy, they flocked to Drury Lane, which was the reason that several days but one house acted ” “ But, alas! the vanity of applauded actors, when they are not crowded to as they may have been, makes them naturally impute the change to any cause rather than the true one, satiety They are mighty loath to think a town, once so fond of them, could ever be tired, and yet, at one time or other, more or less, thin houses have been the certain fate of the most prosperous actors ever since I remember the stage ”‡

In spite, then, of all efforts the attendance began to drop off, and at the Theatre Royal it was found impossible to pay the actors their full salaries. The manager, when the receipts fell low, only paid in proportion, and Cibber declared that

\* “ Comparison between the two Stages ”

† Ibid

‡ This curious observation of Cibber’s is not supported by modern experience, audiences being notoriously constant to all their favourites

during six weeks he had not received a farthing \* The other house, in spite of the aristocratic support, came to the same pass a little later.

“ Such,” says the chronicler, “ was the distress and fortune of both these companies since their division from the Theatre Royal—either working at half wages, or by alternate successes intercepting the bread from one another’s mouths, irreconcileable enemies, yet without hope of relief from a victory on either side, sometimes both parties reduced, and yet each supporting their spirits by seeing the other under the same calamity.”

All through this we have glimpses of Mr Rich always drawn in the most uncomplimentary style, as an artful, pettifogging schemer, with certain powers of insinuation “ Our good master was as fly a tyrant as ever was at the head of a theatre, for he gave the actors more liberty, and fewer days’ pay, than any of his predecessors. He would laugh with them over a bottle, and bite them in their bargains, he kept them poor, that they might not be able to rebel; and sometimes merry, that they might not think of it All their articles of agreement had a clause in them that he was sure to creep out at —viz. their respective salaries were to be paid in such manner and proportion as others of the same company were paid; which, in effect, made them all, when he pleased, but limited sharers of loss, and himself sole proprietor of profits; and this loss, or profit, they only had such verbal accounts of as he thought proper to give them ’Tis true, he would sometimes advance them money (but not more than he knew at most could be due to them) upon their bonds, upon which, whenever they were mutinous, he would threaten to sue them”—an account that seems prejudiced. It is admitted that the theatre

\* It would seem that “ sharing ” was now done away with, as Cibber speaks of salaries and later of Wilks standing out for 4*l* a week

was not "paying." It was impossible, therefore, to look for money where none was received. In a dedication, we find him addressed in the most complimentary strain, his wit and "sweetness of temper" praised, and this circumstance of his advancing money to the players extolled. "How often did you send on your own money and recruit your actors with it, when there was no other ammunition in the camp?"\* This is the testimony of Estcourt, one of his company. There is, however, a touch of exaggeration about this praise, which is inscribed to "the serene Charles Rich, Chief Patentee and Governor," which would seem as though the praises were ironical. He was "a close, subtle man," as Cibber says, and was not only "chief patentee," but kept all his co-patentees without receiving a shilling's return from their property, and for years cleverly contrived to baffle them.

These sharers were persons of such high degree as Lord Guilford, Lord T Harvey, Lady Brownlow, and Sir E Smith, Sir Thomas Skipwith, Mrs Shadwell, with Davenant and Killigrew. They were at last forced to apply to the Court of Chancery, and he eagerly welcomed law proceedings as a pretext for further delays and chicanery. When they had driven him to a contempt of court, he was ready with new devices. In sheer despair, therefore, they were compelled to leave him in possession, and, until he was at last ejected, never received a shilling. "So that by this expedient our good master had long walked about at his leisure, cool and contented as a fox when the hounds were drawn off"†.

In this state of things the playwriters found their account,

\* Dedication to "Stage Beaux tossed in a Blanket"

† In the petition to Queen Anne, some ten years later, the ill used patentees complain piteously that "since the year 1695 they have become yearly considerable losers, that they were at last compelled to trouble Her Majesty with an application to prevent their being brought into danger of losing their whole estate in the said premises" (Drury Lane MSS Brit Mus 20)

and the managers of both theatres seem to have received amateurs and their works with a freedom that was almost reckless. Within half-a-dozen years it is computed that over one hundred and sixty pieces were brought forward, a large proportion of which did not survive the first night.

How this "opposition" engaged the interest and partanship of the town we learn from a vivacious writer and dramatist, named Gildon, who has left one of those rare little tracts which are so valuable as the record of a contemporary observer. He deals specially with this flood of amateur compositions. "I must confess," he says, "our present poetry never was at so low an ebb, and yet the stages were never so deluged. I am sure you can't name me five plays that have endured six days' acting for fifty that were damned in three. Just as in a time of general plague, almost every man you meet has the tokens of the infection they are no sooner out of the cradle but they enter into their graves. How this apostacy happens is obvious enough the division of the houses made way for a multitude of young writers, some of whom had nothing else to subsist on but their pens, and I despair of seeing our poetry restored till I see the houses united, for then the bad plays may be shut out. Some people find out a strange reason for this degeneracy they say poetry has not been much encouraged in the late reign. But nothing can be more absurd. The people never were in a better humour for plays, nor were the houses ever so crowded, though the rates have run very high, sometimes to a scandalous excess; never did printed plays rise to such a price, and what is more, never were so many poets preferred as in the last ten years. If this be discouragement, I have done. On the contrary, the poets have had too great an encouragement." A sprightly dialogue follows between a critic called Chagrin, Sullen, and another, which shows that the interest and critical

observation was as deep as it would have been in any political matter. One speaks of "the perplexity I have been under concerning the success of the two playhouses. I have often wondered how they have so long subsisted in an age so barren of good plays and in such a dearth of wit, and when the wayward humour of the town makes it so difficult to please them long in any kind."

The series of plays given by both houses were, said one, perfectly detestable "*Sull.* Why then we'll proceed from the first celebrated comedy at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and so hand 'em down rough as they run, good and bad, to this time —*Crit.* Damn it, 'tis counting of brass money, five pieces of gold may stand against a horse-load of it Why I'll maintain it, there have been in both houses since the year '95, that is, since their division, about a hundred and three score plays gad's my life, d'ye think I have the patience to hear 'em all examined?—*Sull. Impunitis*, here's 'Pyrrhus King of Epir' —*Ramb.* Whose is that?—*Sull.* Charles Hopkins', an Irish gentleman of good sense, and an excellent Ovidian —*Ramb.* What was its fate?—*Sull.* Damn'd —*Ramb.* the next?—*Sull.* 'A Very Good Wife'—*Ramb.* That's almost a solecism. whose is it?—*Sull.* Oh, an excellent author's! one George Powell's, the player.—*Ramb.* What was its fate?—*Sull.* Damn'd, damn'd, as it deserv'd —*Ramb.* The next?—*Sull.* 'Cyrus the Great'—*Ramb.* Whose was that?—*Sull.* Banks's, which the players damn'd and would not act of a great while, but at length it was acted, and damn'd then in manner and form.—*Ramb.* What's next?—*Sull.* 'Love's Last Shift, or, The Fool in Fashion'—*Ramb.* Ay, marry, that play was the philosopher's stone; I think it did wonders —*Sull.* It did so, and very deservedly, there being few comedies that came up to it for purity of plot, manners, and moral It's often acted nowadays, and, by the help of the author's own good action,

it pleases to this day—*Ramb.* Go on.—*Sull* ‘The Country Wake’—*Ramb* Oh, that’s Dogget’s The players have all got the ‘itching leprosy of scribbling,’ as Ben Jonson calls it; ‘twill in time descend to the scene-keepers and candle-snuffers . . . *Sull*. I have marked them with my pencil as I went over them. Here’s one, two, three, four, five—here’s just a score, of which number eighteen have the honour to be damn’d . . . “The Novelty,” every word stolen and then damn’d . . . *cum multis aliis quae nunc*, and so forth; all damned, every son and daughter for ever.—*Crit.* Without being biassed or prejudiced, I do take ‘The Double Dealer’ to be among the most correct and regular comedies Mr Congreve intended it so, and it cost him unusual labour to do it, but, as he says, he has been at a needless expense, and the town is to be treated at a cheaper rate—*Sull* Sometimes a song or a dance may be admitted into a play without offending our reason I won’t say it is at any time necessary, for some of our best tragedies have neither, but perhaps it may be done without offence, sometimes to alleviate the attention of the audience, to give the actors time and respite, but always with regard to the scene, for by no means must it be made a business independent of that. In this particular our operas are highly criminal, the music in them is for the most part an absurd impertinence. For instance, how ridiculous is it in that scene in ‘The Prophetess,’ where the great action of the drama stops, and the chief officers of the army stand still with their swords drawn to hear a fellow sing, ‘Let the soldiers rejoice,’ faith, in my mind, it is as unreasonable as if a man should call for a pipe of tobacco just when the priest and his bride are waiting for him at the altar. The examples are innumerable—no opera is without them\*—*Ramb* At six I’ll meet you at Lincoln’s Inn

\* A happy criticism, which would apply to many a modern opera

Playhouse—*Sull* I wonder what play is it?—*Ramb.* ‘The Way of the World,’ with the new dancer, Madam d’Subligny.—*Crit* There’s another toy now. Gad! there’s not a year but some surprising monster lands, I wonder they don’t first show her at Fleet Bridge with an old drum and a cracked trumpet—‘Walk in and take your places, just going to show’—*Ramb.* Let’s meet there, methinks I long to be ogling madam’s feet—*Sull.* No, I’m not for meeting there; ‘The Generous Conqueror’ is acted at the other house, and lest it should never be acted again, let’s go see it to-night—*Sull* It was otherwise lately with Balon, the town ran mad to see him, and the prices were raised to an extravagant degree to bear the extravagant rate they allowed him—*Ramb* But, above all, commend me to Signor Clement—*Crit.* I never knew the ladies so far out of their wits”

It is curious to find that at this era, with all this abundance of native growth, the English stage was to be under nearly as heavy obligations to the French as it has been in these later days. Not only was the spirit of Molière infused into many of the broadly humorous pieces of the day, but his plots and characters were freely borrowed by writers even of the rank of Congreve. A long line of writers could be shown—Wycherly, Congreve, Cibber, Foote, Garrick, and others—who have laid themselves under obligations to the great French writer. The favourite treatment would appear to have been to take some broad character like Tartuffe, and follow the same treatment but on English lines. It may, however, be urged that in the case of such masters of human nature there are types common to all races and countries, and the borrowing is very different from the whole adaptation and translation of modern days. We are familiar enough with the system in our times, when almost the playwright’s whole art consists in skilful adaptations from the French, and even in the readaptation of

already adapted plays Even so early as the Revolution, in 1688, this system had attracted the attention of Gerard Langbaine, who, with infinite diligence, collected all the instances he could find. He called his work "Momus Triumphans or, The Plagiaries of the English Stage, expos'd in a Catalogue of all the Comedies, Tragi-Comedies, Masques, Tragedies, Opera's, Pastorals, Interludes, etc Both ancient and modern, that were ever yet print'd in English The names of their known and supposed authors Their several volumes and editions with an account of the various originals, as well English, French, and Italian, as Greek and Latine, from whence most of them have stole their plots"

The reader will note the plain word used, "stole" He tells us in his preface that he has purchased all the pieces he could find—"and, indeed, I have been master of above nine hundred and fourscore English plays and masques, besides drolls and interludes"—and has read most of them The amount of reading and labour necessary to pursue this "hunt" must have been enormous "If we now," he says, "examine the proceedings of our late English writers, we shall find them diametrically opposite in all things Shakspear and Johnson indeed imitated these illustrious men I have cited; the one having borrow'd 'The Comedy of Errors' from the 'Menechmi' of Plautus, the other has made use not only of him, but of Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Salust, and several others, according to his occasions, for which he is commended by Mr. Dryden, as having thereby beautified our language; and Mr Rymer, whose judgment of him is this: I cannot (says he) be displeased with honest Ben, when he chuses rather to borrow a melon of his neighbour than to treat us with a pumpon of his own growth But for the most part we are treated far otherwise, not with sound Roman wit, as in Ben's time, but with empty French kickshaws, which yet our

poetical hosts serve up to us for regales of their own cookery; and yet they themselves undervalue that very nation to whom they are oblig'd for the best share of their treat. Thus our launeat himself runs down the French wit in his ‘*Marriage à la Mode*,’ and steals from Molière in his ‘*Mock Astrologer*’”

Then follows an extraordinary catalogue of some five or six hundred pieces, with notes at the foot of every page, showing whence the plot or the subject of the play in its entirety was taken. Molière seems to have been diligently laid under contribution. In every direction—some most surprising—we find these borrowings. The fine drama, “*Venice Preserved*,” is thus supported, the plan being taken from a little book, the Abbé de St Real’s “*Histoire de la Conjuration du Marquis de Bedemar*.” The speech of Renault to the conspirators is translated word for word from this author, whom Voltaire ranks with Sallust, declaring that his work is superior to that of Otway, as well as to “*Manlius*,” a French tragedy on the same subject. The play called “*The London Cuckolds*,” one of the greatest successes of the century, was entirely composed of other persons’ property. The characters of Wiseacre and Peggy, and the scene of Peggy’s watching her husband’s nightcap in armour during his absence, are from Scarron’s “*Fruitless Precaution*.” Loveday’s discovering Eugenia’s intrigue, and screening it by pretending to conjure for a supper, from the “*Contes d’Ouville*.” Eugenia’s contrivance to have Jane take her place while she goes out, from the “*Mescanza dolce*,” at the end of Torriano’s Grammar, her scheme for the bringing off Ramble and Loveday, by obliging the former to draw his sword and counterfeit passion, from Boccace. Doodle’s obliging his wife Arabella to answer nothing but “No” to all questions during his absence, and the consequence of that intrigue, from the “*Contes d’Ouville*,” and Eugenia’s making a false confidence to her husband Dash-

well, and sending him into the garden in her clothes to be beaten by Loveday, from "Les Contes de Fontaine."

Nat Lee was a leading contributor to the drama, writing in a style of high and extravagant inflation. As it was said, his imagination ran away with his reason, and finally both left him. While in Bedlam he made that famous reply to one who had jeered him on his misfortune by observing that it was an easy thing to write like a madman. "No," said Lee, "it is not an easy thing to write like a madman, but it is very easy to write like a fool" Lee recovered the use of his reason, but he did not long survive his enlargement, dying in the year 1691, or 1692 Oldys, in his MS. notes, says that our author, "returning one night from the Bear and Harrow, in Butcher Row, through Clare Market to his lodgings in Duke Street, overladen with wine, he fell down on the ground, as some say, according to others, on a bulk, and was killed or stifled in the snow. He was aged about thirty-five years Thus he adds one more to the train of disastrous dramatists His gift of reading out his own plays when in the green-room was remarkable While he was reading to Major Mohun at a rehearsal, Mohun, in the warmth of his admiration, threw down his part and said "Unless I were able to play it as well as you read it, to what purpose should I undertake it?"

The crafty manager was still fertile in resources, and one of his devices for bringing back persons of quality to his house was one which was curiously destined to influence the stage. The footmen who attended their masters' coaches and chais to the theatre used to arrive about the last act, and were then allowed admission to the gallery Rich now announced that he would admit them *gratis* during the whole performance This, as Cibber says, he imagined "would not only incline them to give us a good word in the respective families they belonged to, but would naturally incite them to come all hands aloft in

the crack of our applauses. And, indeed, it so far succeeded, that it often thundered from the full gallery above, when our thin pit and boxes below were in the utmost serenity. This riotous privilege, so craftily given, and which from custom was at last ripened into right, became the most disgraceful nuisance that ever depreciated the theatre." Indeed, among the annals of Drury Lane, "footmen riots" were henceforth to be recorded.

Indeed, the behaviour of the audiences seems to have been habitually brutal—a brutality, however, that must have been fostered by the multitude of bad dramas submitted to them. As one of them protested wittily enough "Every fool, the lowest member of the mob, becomes a wit, and will have a fling at him. They come now to a full play like hounds to a carcass, and are all in a full cry, sometimes for an hour together, until the curtain rises to throw it amongst them. In a word, this new class of critics seems to me like the lion whelps in the Tower, who so boisterously game at their meals that they dash down the bowls of food brought for their own breakfast."

## CHAPTER V.

### AUTHORS AND AUDIENCES

We have seen what complaint was made of the over-abundance of authors. An amusing account is given of the mode in which a new play was accepted and brought out. “A gentleman,” says the narrator, “carried a play to Drury Lane. A day was appointed for the reading. A dinner was bespoke at a tavern, to which only half the number of the players came—as it seems each was presumed to pay his share of the score. In the reading of it (that is, after dinner) most of them dropped off, but two remained to hear it out, and then they walked, so that there was but the gentleman and his friend left, and not a penny all this while paid towards the reckoning. The play was ordered to be licensed, so that forty shillings for the dinner, and forty more for the licence, made just 4*l*, so much it cost him already. This happened to be in Lent, and the players having then the first day of a play given them, this was bespoke, so the author had the mortification of having it acted in Lent. But the devil on’t was, he was obliged to treat every one of his players all the while it was in rehearsal, to keep them in study, and in that exploit it cost him in coach hire and wine near 10*l*. Well, his third day came, and a good appearance there was. I sat in the pit, and I think I never

saw better boxes. The play came off pretty well, and the poet was much exalted for so good an escape, for it was his first. His friends joyed him when it was over, and he thought he had now the Indies to receive Pay-day came, and what do you think he received?—*Crit.* Had he only a third night?—*Sull.* No more, it lasted but four.—*Crit.* I suppose he paid the charges?—*Sull.* That you may swear—*Crit.* Then he might receive— The house was full you say?—*Sull.* Excellent pit and boxes, and, I believe, full above—*Crit.* Why, then, he might receive 70*l*, nay, I diminish it as much as I can, because I know their way of bringing in their bills of charges—*Sull.* He received but 15*l*—*Crit.* 'Sdeath! How could that be? The ordinary charge is about 34*l* a day—*Sull.* But the extraordinary (when they please to make it so) is very extraordinary, without any compass. They brought him bills for gloves, for chocolate, for snuff, this singer begged a guinea, that dancer the same, one actor wished him joy, and asked how he liked his performance; 'Oh, very well, Mr. —. I ought to gratify—' Another cries, 'Oh dear, Mr. —, I never took so much pains in my life, that deserves a kiss and a present,' and the next morning away flies another guinea.—*Crit.* By this account you make him a loser”

It would seem that it was open almost to anyone to furnish a play, and indeed, with the players so dependent on the Court and courtiers, it is natural that the fine gentleman of the day should use the opening which such dependence offered to him.

I believe (says a lively writer) it often happens that an old or a young poet takes pen, ink, and paper, sits down to his scrutoire, or perhaps a table. He finds it necessary to write a play He turns over God knows how many volumes for a story, or he makes one, and then he writes a play. The dispute is, must it be a tragedy or comedy?

And again, as to the managers

Their behaviour is recent in every memory, when both companies were united under their banner. The spectators, poets, and actors of those days can but in death forget it. We seldom then had an opera to entertain us, and our music was in a tolerably bad way. Plays we had none, but what and when they pleased to give us one. So even our men of sense and ladies of fashion were forced to run for amusement to the puppet-show and bear-garden. Either the underling actors were dignified with the principal characters, or, if the heads condescended to visit the town, they but trifled, yawned, and slept three hours away. They grudged the smallest expense to invite or amuse company. They were sensible they had no other house to go to. A new scene or suit of clothes, a new dance or piece of music, were as rare as a comet, and when they blazed forth their prices were raised, and the town paid the piper. Thus they enriched themselves, starved their players, and fooled our nobility and gentry.

As to the behaviour of the audience, they are generally so very impatient to gain the centre of the pit or the first row of the gallery, that they hurry from dinner with spouse under one arm and the remnants of an unfinished meal in a coloured handkerchief under the other. As the plot of the play begins to thicken their appetites grow sharp, having not been sufficiently stuffed at noon. They stretch and cry, "Lord, when will these tiresome people have done? I wish we had a dance, and were a-bed."

I met one of these judging gentlemen after a new play at the coffee house, so asked Sir Wilham how he liked the new play? Extremely well, sir, a mighty full house. Did Mrs. Ol—ld's part become her? I never saw her look with better red and white in my life. W—ks, they say, appeared to great advantage in his. Certainly the prettiest fancied suit of clothes he ever wore! Was not M—lls prodigiously clapped? He spoke some fine things, and I must own the cock of his hat and dangle of his cane were not amiss. But C—r is sure the comicalest impudentest dog that ever was born.

And certainly the state of the stage and the profaneness

and indecency of the players seemed at this time to be running riot, and challenged the interference of all proper persons. Vigorous efforts were made to restrain and chastise them. In "A Refutation of the Apology for the Actors," published in the "Camden Miscellany," and dated 1703, we read.

And here the English poets and players are still like themselves they strain to a singularity of coarseness. The modern theatres of Europe are mere vestals to them. . . To flash a little upon the imagination, and appear in the twilight, is not mischief enough. No, they love to have their sense clear and determined. They labour for perspicuity, and shine out in mire and in scandal. They were indeed found incorrigible. Their ill plays have been some of them examined, their licentious extravagance marked, and repeated instances produced upon them . . . The players have met with faster instruction. The saws have been let loose upon them. They have been disciplined at Westminster Hall. They are proof against reason and punishment, against fines' argument, and come over again with the old smut and profanity.

At last, the licence in the pieces performed, even under the decorous Government of King William, became so excessive as to call for the issue of an order to the following effect, and dated

February 13, 1698.

His Majesty being informed that, notwithstanding an order made in June, 1697, by the Earl of Sunderland, then Lord Chamberlain of the King's household, to prevent the profaneness and immorality of the stage, several plays have lately been acted containing several expressions contrary to religion and good manners, and whereas the Master of the Revels hath represented that, in contempt of the said order, the actors did neglect to leave out such profane and indecent expressions as he thought proper to be omitted, therefore it is His Majesty's pleasure that they shall not hereafter presume to act anything in any play contrary to religion and good manners, as they shall answer at their utmost peril.

Yet we find that, notwithstanding this protest, Her Majesty commanded the performance of Congreve's "Double Dealer," to which Macaulay applies the epithet "revolting," as regards "a group which seems to belong to the house of Caius and Pelops," and which "shocked" an audience.

At the same time the Master of the Revels was ordered not to license any play containing immoral or irreligious expressions, and to give notice to the Lord Chamberlain, "if the players presumed to act anything which he had struck out." Nor was this uncalled for, as there was a sort of buffooning irreverence tolerated. In the same year, 1698, when Farquhar's "Love and Bottle" was performed, it was wound up by an epilogue spoken by a jester, who took occasion to revile the foreign exotics.

For about this time the English stage was not only pestered with tumblers and rope dancers from France, but likewise dancing masters and dancing dogs, shoals of Italian squallers were daily imported, and the Drury Lane Company almost broke. Upon this occasion the facetious Jo Haynes composed this epilogue, and spoke it in mourning, viz.

No Royal Theatre, I come to mourn for thee.

*Vivitur ingenio*, that damn'd motto there,

Motto over the stage,

Seduced me first to be a wicked player.

But can ye have the hearts tho'—pray, now speak—

After all our services to let us break?

Ye cannot do't unless the devil's in ye,

What art, what merit havn't we used to win ye

First, to divert ye with some new French strollers,

We brought ye *Bona seres*, Barba Colers,

Mimic French singing.

When this male throat no longer drew your money

We got yon eunuch's pipe, Signor Pompony.

An Italian now we got of mighty fame,  
Don Sigismondo Fidel—there's music in his name,  
His voice is like the music of the spheres  
It should be heavenly for the price it bears

The critics discoursed of the outlandish entertainments offered to "the town"

The town ran mad [one says] to see "Balon," and the prices were raised to an extravagant degree to bear the extravagant rate they allowed him. But, above all, commend me to Signor Clemente. . . I never knew his ladies so out of their senses. But the opera now possesses the stage, and after a hard struggle at length it prevailed, and something more than charges came in every night. The quality, who are always lovers of good music, flock hither, and by almost a total revolt from the other house, give this new life and set it in some eminency above the new. This was a sad mortification to the old stages in Lincoln's Inn Fields—*Crit* At last, as you say, the old stagers moulded a piece of pastry-work of their own, and made a kind of Lenten Feast with their "Rinaldo" and "Armida." This surprised not only Drury Lane, but, indeed, all the town, nobody ever dreaming of an opera there. 'Tis true, they heard of Homer's "Illiads in a nut-shell" and "Jack in a box," and what not. But where's the wonder? why such amazement?—*Sull* Well, with this vagary they tugged awhile, and "The jolly, jolly breeze came whistling through" all the town, and not a fop but ran to see the "Celebrated Virgin" in a machine. There she shined in a full zodiac, the brightest constellation there. 'Twas a pleasant reflection all this time to see her situated among the bulls, capricorns, and sagittaries—*Crit* But this merry time lasted not always. Everything has an end, and at length down goes Rinaldo's enchanted Mountain. It sunk as it arose, by magic, and there's now not so much as a mole-hill seen on it.

Then other shows are described:

Oh what a charming sight it was to see Madam — swim it along the stage between her two gipsy daughters; they

## A NEW HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH STAGE

skated along the ice so cleverly you might have sworn they were of right Dutch extraction — *Sull.* And the Sieur Allard. — *Crit Ay,* the Sieur and the two monsieurs, his sons— rogues that show at Paris for a groat apiece, and here they were an entertainment for the Court and his late Majesty.— *Ramb* Oh — “Harlequin and Scaramouch” — *Crit Ay*; what a rout there was with a night-piece of “Harlequin and Scaramouch,” with the guitar and bladder! What jumping over tables and joint-stools! What ridiculous postures and grimaces! And what an excellent trick it was to straddle before the audience, making a thousand damned French faces. — *Sull* And yet the town was so fond of this that the rascals brought the greatest houses that ever were known — *Ramb.* But what have you to say to Madam Ragonde and her eight daughters? I assure you I think Nivelong a very humorous dancer.

Among other scandals was the following. When a new play was produced, it was actually uncertain whether the allusions made, or the behaviour of the actors, would be enough to prevent every woman of decency from attending. On the other hand, the ladies did not relish forfeiting their evening’s amusement, especially the excitement of a *première*. The device of going in masks was thought of, which was of course naturally absurd.

Some of the incidents are significant. Thus, when Mr. Pinkethman took his benefit in September, 1702—he had before played Harlequin “without a mask”—a notice was issued to the effect that “all persons that come behind the scenes are desired to pay their money to none *but him.*” At another benefit “None to go into the boxes or pit but with the subscribers’ tickets, but the galleries and the boxes on the stage are for the benefit of the house.” And again at a concert “The boxes will be opened into the pit, into which none will be admitted without printed tickets, not exceeding four hundred at

“*— to be returned after the curtain is drawn*”

At the other house a rival "Iphigenia" was brought out at great cost, but which failed. Rival Shakespeare plays were then attempted. Anything one house attempted was "trumped" by the other. No wonder a contemporary wrote of these freaks in 1699.

Of late the playhouses are so extremely pestered with wizard masks and their trade (occasioning continued quarrels and abuses), that many of the more civilised part of the town are uneasy in their company, and shun the theatres as they would a house of scandal. It is an argument of the worth of players and actors of the last age, and easily inferred, that they were much beyond ours in this, that they could support themselves merely from their own merit, the weight of the matter and goodness of the action, without scenes and machines, whereas the present plays, with all that show, can hardly draw an audience, unless there be the additional invitation of a Signor Fidelì or Monsieur L'Abbé, or some such foreign regale expressed at the bottom of the bill

And yet the company at Drury Lane in the season of 1702-3 consisted of the following—a truly efficient corps:

Mr. Baggs, Mr. Bullock, Mr. Bowen, Mr. Bowman, Mr. Fairbank, Mr. Cibber, Captain Griffin, Mr. Huband, Mr. Hall, Mr. Johnson, Mr. Leveridge, Mr. Mills, Mr. Norris, Mr. Newman, Mr. Penkethum, Mr. Swiney, Mr. Wilks

Mrs Bicknell, Mrs Campion, Signora Gasparini, Mrs Kent, Mrs Lucas, Mrs Moore, Mrs. Rogers, Mrs. Shaw, Mrs Verbenggen

*Singers*—Mr Leveridge, Mrs Shaw, Mr and Mrs. Lindsay, Signorina Lindheim, Signorina Joanna Maria, Mrs. Campion, Mr. Pate, Mr. Hughes

*Instrumentalists*—M Paisible, M Gasparini, M Luigione.

*Dancers*—Mr. Cotton, Mrs. Bicknell, M. la Ferry, Devonshire girls, M. du Ruel, Mrs Claxton, Mdlle. St. Leger.

The great horse vaulting by Mr. Evans.

Once more the Court attempted to interpose, and with

unusual vigour. In 1702, by direction of Queen Anne, a prosecution was instituted in the Court of Queen's Bench against certain the players of Lincoln's Inn Fields, who were duly tried before Chief Justice Holt, and found guilty of "uttering impious, lewd, and immoral expressions."

It is scarcely surprising that all sober citizens, magistrates, and others should have considered the stage a nursery of disorder and a school for depraved manners. From the days of Charles the Second to the year 1737, when the stringent Licensing Act was passed, the course of the stage was marked by licence and disorders even more significant were the quarrels and riots which it engendered. Some of these were of the most lawless and bloody kind, arising from the violent passions, the jealousies, and hatreds of players and men about town. The Coventry episode, and that of the unhappy Mountfort, have been described, but it was about the commencement of the century that a number of these brawls occurred, and which show how reckless and violent were the passions engendered. Some of the measures taken by the various governing bodies have often seemed harsh and besotted, but they are amply justified by the incidents that occurred. The brutal social life of the time, under all the tawdry finery and French manners of the Court, could hardly be better shown than by a tavern brawl which took place in May, 1696. "Some players," we read in "The Protestant Mercury," "drinking at the Rose Tavern, Covent Garden, made some noise, which offending some gentlemen in an adjoining room, one of them looked out and spoke some words, which the players retorting, swords were drawn, and Mr. Horden, the player,\* was killed in the scuffle, on which the gentlemen fled; but Captain Burgess, lately tried for killing Mr. Fane, was taken. At the

\* Of this young player Cibber gives a pleasing character "I cannot here forget," he says, "a misfortune that befel our society about this time, by the

coroner's jury, a verdict was given against all six. The captain was committed to the Gatehouse, Westminster, but on the 24th was rescued by a dozen or more fellows with short clubs and pistols. A reward of 50*l* was offered. In November, 1697, he returned from Flanders to take his trial. The rumour went that he was to be pardoned" Here are elements that are cruel, degrading, and brutal, poor players assailed for "making some noise," a rescue by hired bullies, the preceding killing of Mr. Fane, and the too probable pardon of the offender.

Again we learn that in the year 1700 certain persons felt great displeasure at the abuses of theatrical entertainments, and that at length the grand jury of Middlesex made a presentment to the effect "that plays frequently acted at Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatres are full of profane, irreverent, lewd, indecent, and immoral expressions, and tend to the great displeasure of Almighty God and the corruption of the auditory both in their principles and their practices." They added that they also tended "to the debauching and ruining of youth resorting thereto, and to the break of the peace; they were the occasion of riots, routs, and disorderly assemblies, many murders and other misdemeanours have been frequently done, and particularly the barbarous murder of Sir Andrew Stanning, which was lately committed as he came out of the playhouse, and that the common acting of the plays at the said playhouses is a public nuisance" Yet

loss of a young actor, Hildebrand Horden, who was killed at the bar of the Rose Tavern in a frivolous, rash, accidental quarrel, for which a late resident at Venice, Colonel Burgess, and several other persons of distinction, took their trials and were acquitted. This young man had almost every natural gift that could promise an excellent actor, he had, besides, a good deal of table wit and humour, with a handsome person, and was every day rising into public favour. Before he was buried, it was observable that, two or three days together, several of the fair sex, well dressed, came in masks (then frequently worn), and some in their own coaches, to visit this theatrical hero in his shroud. He was the elder son of Dr Horden, minister of Twickenham, in Middlesex."

two years later, in December, 1702, people read in their newspaper of "a renounter" that happened on the very stage of Drury Lane Theatrie, between Mr Goodyear and "Beau" Fielding, the well-known "Fribble" of his day "At a representation of 'The Scornful Lady' for the benefit of Mrs Oldfield," says Curl, in his life of that actress, "many persons of distinction were behind the scenes Among others Beau Fielding came, and being always mighty ambitious of showing his fine make and shape, as he himself used vainly to talk, he very closely pressed forward upon some gentlemen, but in particular upon one Mr Fulwood, a bairister of Gray's Inn, an acquaintance of Mrs Oldfield's Mr Fulwood, being a gentleman of quick resentment, told Fielding he used him rudely Upon which the other laid his hand upon his sword. Mr Fulwood instantly drew, and gave Fielding a wound of twelve inches deep in the belly. This putting the audience into the greatest consternation, Mr Fulwood was with much entreaty persuaded to leave the place At length, out of respect to Mrs Oldfield, he did so" Now, only going thus far, what a picture of the interior of the playhouse, and what strange incidents! The stage was of course in possession of the "fine gentleman," and "built in" for his benefit, the audience were allowed to indulge their consternation, while the inflicter of the wound was allowed to depart without molestation This Mohock repaired to Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre Thereupon "Mr Fulwood went into the pit, and in a very few minutes cast his eye upon one Captain Cusack, to whom he had an old grudge, and there demanded satisfaction of him Captain Cusack, without the least hesitation, obeyed the summons They went into the fields, and in less than half an hour word was brought into the house that Mr Fulwood was killed on the spot, and Captain Cusack had made his escape."

Even among the players themselves the same violent spirit was shown. Sixteen years later there was at Drury Lane a well-trained meritorious player called Bowen, who, we are told, played Setter in "The Old Bachelor," Jeremy in "Love for Love," and Witwould in "The Way of the World," with considerable talent, was remarkable for the loudness of his voice and for his choleric disposition. Meeting Quin at the Pope's Head Tavern, near Clare Market, a sort of house of call for actors, he assailed him with violent abuse for leaving Drury Lane and acting the part of Tamerlane at Lincoln's Inn Fields for one night only. Quin declared that Johnson, who had acted Iachimo in "The Libertine Destroyed" for a night, had greatly surpassed Bowen, who had often played the part. After some further altercation, Bowen retired to a neighbouring tavern and sent for Quin. On his entering, Bowen shut the door and drew his sword, desiring him to do the same. Quin, after remonstrances, was compelled to defend himself, and ran him through the body. Bowen honourably declared that he had had justice done to him, that there had been nothing but fair play, and that if he died he freely forgave his antagonist. Quin was found guilty of manslaughter only, and soon after returned to his professional duties.

More singular still was the affray that occurred about a month later, when another actor, named Ryan, was tried in the same court for killing an officer in a tavern. The affair fell out in this way. "Last Friday was se'night, at night, one Lieutenant Kelly, formerly a half-pay officer, was killed at 'Betty Cox's' at the Sun Ale House, in Long Acre. It happened that Kelly burst abruptly into the room where one Ryan, a player at Lincoln's Inn Fields Playhouse, sat, as they say, at supper, and drawing his sword swore, 'G—d d—him, he'd kill him!' Ryan asked him if he was in earnest, and why he quarrelled with him, saying it was better to defer

the dispute till another time, in that the lieutenant was drunk, using other arguments to divert him from his purpose. The lieutenant making two lunges at him, which the other parried with his arm, he was at last compelled to draw his sword, and 'at the first push' ran him through the body."

While Betteiton and his friends were performing, Rich was all the time looking on with a curious indifference, no doubt believing that the scheme would fail. As a writer in that oddly-named journal, "The Post-boy robb'd of his Mail," says, there were certain reasons for prognosticating failure—its being built at the fag-end of the town, whether audiences could not resort without "an insupportable expense." Then the theatre was in itself "nothing better than what we had before except in the front." Next, in not employing the players of Drury Lane, who kept out of articles a long time, in expectation of being sent to "But Rich, either through pride, negligence, or something worse, never minded till they were all engaged, and then, without any manner of justice, forced away one of them, when he might fairly, and without noise, have had the major part and the best." Rich himself declared that the Court was against him, for he says that "I did humbly offer to his lordship (the Chamberlain) that I would receive the company at Lincoln's Inn Fields at such salaries as his lordship would think reasonable." What a stain of lowly submission is here! But his lordship was pleased to declare that Her Majesty would have two companies. That pleasant writer, Mr Cibber, who imparts a flavour of comedy to all that he describes, gives us a picture of Rich behind the scenes at Drury Lane, where he called on him to learn his views, for, as he said with much justness, "there would always some sort of merit remain with fidelity, though unsuccessful." Suggesting that the Drury Lane corps was sadly thinned, he asked his master "in what manner he intended to proceed. He replied,

'Don't you trouble yourself, come along, and I'll show you' He then led me about all the by-places in the house, and showed me fifty little back-doors, dark closets, and narrow passages, in alterations and contrivances of which kind he had busied his head most part of the vacation, for he was scarce ever without some notable joiner or a bricklayer extraordinary in pay for twenty years And there are so many odd obscure places about a theatre, that his genius in nook-building was never out of employment, nor could the most vain-headed author be more deaf to an interruption in reciting his works than our wise master was while entertaining me with the improvements he had made in his invisible architecture, all which, without thinking any one part of it necessary, though I seemed to approve, I could not help now and then breaking in upon his delight with the impertinent question of, 'But, master, where are your actors?'"

That there was some hope of accommodation is evident from an advertisement, issued in March, 1703, by which "Sir Thomas Skipwith, Mr. Rich, and all who are in any ways concerned in the playhouse in Drury Lane, whether in the house-rents or profits of acting comedies, etc., are earnestly desired to meet at the Old Devil Tavern, to make an amicable arrangement of all differences, and are all desired to meet on Saturday, 18th instant, at five of the clock."

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE HAYMARKET OPERA

QUEEN ANNE, being now on the throne, bestowed some thought on abuses, and once more forbade going behind the scenes or entering without payment.

“Her Majesty having been pleased to issue her royal commands for a better regulation of the theatres, a copy thereof is as follows.

“Whereas we have already given orders to both companies nothing shall be acted contrary to religion or good manners upon pain of our high displeasure, and of being silenced from further acting, and being further desirous to reform all other indecencies and abuses of the stage, which have occasioned great disorders and justly given offence, our will and pleasure is, and we do hereby strictly command, that no person of what quality soever presume to go behind the scenes, or come upon the stage either before or during the acting of any play, that no woman be allowed or presume to wear a vizard mask in either of the theatres, and that no person come into the house without paying the price established for the respective places, all which orders we strictly command all the managers, sharers, and actors of the said companies to see exactly observed and obeyed, and we require and command all our constables, and others appointed to attend the theatres, to be aiding and assisting to them therein; and if any person what-

ever shall disobey this our known pleasure and command, we shall proceed against them as contemners of our royal authority and disturbers of the public peace Given at our Court of St. James, 17th day of January.\*

Another fancy now seized on the town. A new opposition theatre had now been planned in the Haymarket for the performance of opera and entertainments. The plan was distinctly favoured by the Court, and the Chamberlain held out every prospect of encouragement in hostility to the old patents The plan was actually taken in hand when thirty "persons of quality" subscribed 100*l* each, in return for which each was to have a "life admission" This scheme was promoted by Captain "Vanbrugge" and Mr Congreve, and really suggests a modern attempt whose dilapidated relics may be seen on the Thames Embankment

Captain Vanbrugh, or "Vanbrugge," was certainly versatile in his talents, being a writer, a manager, a herald, and soldier, and last of all an architect of celebrity Nothing is recollected of his soldiering , his management was a failure , his buildings were "heavy loads , " but his "Relapse," produced in 1697, and his unfinished "Journey to London" (its later name) will preserve his fame †

*Daily Courant*, January 24th, 1704 In a piece published in 1704, called, "A Refutation of the Impiety and Immorality of the Stage," it was stated that "Her Majesty had never once given any countenance to the playhouses by her royal presence" It added that in 1699 many players had actually been indicted.

† Cibber, like Foote, appears to have drawn many of his characters and incidents from life Miss Hawkins learned from tradition that "the Miss Jenny of 'The Journey to London' was Miss Lowe, of Locks, in Derbyshire The journey was real, as was the adventure with the person described as Count Basset In the latter part of her life, the lady used to speak very frankly on the subject of her imprudence and her escape from the consequences of it , she soon after saw herself represented on the stage," which she deeply resented, as Cibber had been a guest at her house The Lady Grace of "The Provoked Husband" was Lady Batty Cecil, afterwards Lady Elizabeth Chaplin She was of the Exeter family, and had been a beauty , but the small-pox had rendered her plain, a trial she bore with fortitude

One of the objects aimed at was to furnish Italian operas, a taste for which was then arising. As the prompter Downes informs us, the first stone was laid by the beautiful Lady Sunderland, described as "the little Whig," and a plate of silver to record the ceremony was placed below it.\* The house was magnificent, as might be expected from the designer of Blenheim Palace, and was described as "a vast triumphal piece of architecture," which from the pictures seems, like other works of the architect, to "lay a heavy load on the earth." There were great columns, "gilded cornices, an immoderate high roof. On its first opening the flat ceiling over the orchestra was a semi-oval arch, that sprung fifteen feet higher from above the cornice." The ceiling over the pit, too, was still more raised, being one level line from the highest back part of the upper gallery to the front of the stage. The front boxes were a continued semicircle to the bare walls of the house on each side. This extraordinary and superfluous space occasioned such an undulation from the voice of every actor, that generally what they said sounded like the gabbling of so many people in the lofty aisles of a cathedral. These were serious objections, and the whole had to be altered and contracted.

The Haymarket venture was to prosper for a time, the reason, perhaps, being the marked and open favour of the Court. No doubt it was this feeling which made Rich so complaisant, as he knew he could not contend against such influence. The scheme of desertion was all arranged and put in execution within a week. "And what induced the Court to encourage it was, that by having the theatre and its

\* On the other hand, it is stated that on March 19th, 1825, removing some portion of the walls of the Italian Opera House, the workmen discovered the first stone of the old building, with some coins and an inscription "April 18th, 1704. This corner-stone of the Queen's Theatre was laid by his Grace Charles Duke of Somerset."

manager more immediately dependent on the power of the Lord Chamberlain, it was not doubted but the stage would be recovered into such a reputation as might now do honour to that absolute command which the Court or its officers seemed always fond of having over it” But we shall see more of this developed in a very remarkable way Rich, too, had other designs of entertainment He wished to exhibit shows, singers, rope-dancers, and other fantastic elements, “for it seems he had not purchased his share of the patent to mend the stage, but to make money of it. His point was to please the majority, who could more easily comprehend anything they saw than the daintiest things that could be said to them”—a policy, indeed, not unknown to many modern managers. The consequence of which direction we find thus exhibited “Mr Cherier who, dancing the Punchinello dance, was hissed, but by clapping his hand on his breech turned the humour of the audience, and went off with very great applause” Some years before, Rich had been eager to engage an extraordinarily large elephant, but was only dissuaded by his bricklayers assuring him that the opening necessarily to be made in the wall for the entrance of the beast would endanger the structure

Three first-class theatres being now at work, the strain of the competition fell with most severity on the Lincoln’s Inn Fields house “Betterton, finding himself unequal to the struggle, now transferred his company over to Captain Vanbrugge, to act under him at the theatre in the Haymarket, and upon April 9th, 1705, the latter opened his theatre with a foreign opera, performed by a new set of singers arrived from Italy—the worst that ever came from thence,” for it lasted but five days; and they being liked but indifferently by the gentry, they in a little time marched back to their own country. The first play acted there was ‘The Gamester.’ . . . Then half a score of the

old plays, acted in old clothes the company brought from Lincoln's Inn Fields. . . The audiences falling off extremely with entertaining the gentry with such old ware, whereas had they opened the house at first with a good new English opera, or a new play, they would have preserved the favour of Court and city, and gained reputation and profit to themselves. Then was acted a new comedy called 'The Confederacy,' written by Captain Vanbrugge, an excellent witty play, and all parts very well acted; but the nice critic's censure, that it wanted just decorum, made it flag at last. Then a new opera, called 'The British Enchantress,' which infinitely arridied both sexes and pleased the town."

Notwithstanding, the new enterprise did not flourish. One of Her Majesty's players at Drury Lane, writing to a stroller at Nottingham, says "Our stage is in a very indifferent condition. There has been a very fierce combat between the Haymarket and Drury Lane, and the two sisters, Music and Poetry, quarrel like two fishwives at Billingsgate, and then comes a whole battalion of subscribers who promise to stand by the former. Though Farquhar meets with success, and has the entire happiness of pleasing the upper gallery, Betterton and Wilks, Ben Jonson and the best of them, must give place to a bawling Italian woman, whose voice to me is less pleasing than merry-andrew's playing on the gridiron. 'The Mourning Bride,' 'Plain Dealer,' 'Volpone,' or 'Tamerlane,' will hardly fetch us a tolerable audience, unless we stuff the bills with long entertainments of dances, songs, scaramouched entries, and what not" In this state of things, the enterprise clearly hurrying to disaster, the Chamberlain intervened, and with a capricious harshness that seems truly unjust, began to put pressure on Mr Rich, that he should unite his flourishing enterprise with the failing institution of the Haymarket. This was done at the

instigation of "Mr Vanbrugge," whose miscarriage was owing to a series of blunders and bad management. After being advised all through by persons "who had before ruined two companies," he now was ready to break faith with the persons who had furnished the moneys for opposing the patentees, and prepared to unite with these latter. It was justly said that this was an attempt to destroy the patent and unite the companies when he found his hopes and projects disappointed, contrary to the pleasure and wish of his benefactors, who gave him their subscriptions to keep up two companies. His proposals, sent to the Lord Chamberlain July 19th, 1705, were as follows "(1) That the patent adventurers, on ceasing to act by virtue of their patent, be admitted to a moiety of the clear profits which shall arise from the company now established by the Queen in the Haymarket (2) That there shall no regard be had to each company's past debts, engagements, or stock, their concern together being forward, not backwards. (3) That the persons to be entrusted for the management be named by the Queen, to be at any time changed and removed as she shall think fit. (4) That if these three principal heads be agreed to, the settlement of the inferior matters may be referred to my Lord Chamberlain" About the 25th of July, Mr. Rich sent back an answer to Sir J Stanley, acknowledging a letter from the Chamberlain, that it was his pleasure he should bring in proposals for uniting the companies. He urged fairly that he was concerned with about forty persons either as adventurers under the two patents, or as renters of Covent Garden and Dorset Garden. Now, to receive other persons as sharers would be a breach of trust, and the proprietors "would tear him to pieces with lawsuits." He had already drawn on himself many lawsuits. "Sir, I am a purchaser under the patents to above the value of 2000*l.* (a great part of which

was under the marriage settlements of Dr Davenant) After ten years' employment, expense, and diligence, I have succeeded in pleasing the town, and the profits begin to reimburse, and the result must be the undoing of myself and others, to raise great estates to M<sup>r</sup> Vanbrugge ”

“ After this,” says our old prompter, “ Captain Vanbrugge gave leave to Mr Verbruggen and Mr. Booth, and all the young company, to act the remainder of the summer what plays they could by their own industry get up for their own benefit, continuing to Bartholomew Eve, August 23rd, 1706 But all that time the profit amounted not to half the salaries they received in winter From Bartholomew's Day to the 15th of October following there was no more acting there. In the interval Vanbrugge had agreed with Swiney, and, with the concurrence of the Lord Chamberlain, transferred and invested the services and government of the theatre to Swiney, who brought with him from Mr. Rich, Mr Wilks, Mr Cibber, Mr Mills, Mr Johnson, Mr Keene, Mr No<sup>t</sup>is, M<sup>r</sup> Fanbank, M<sup>r</sup> Oldfield, united them to the old company, Mr Betterton and Mr Undeihill being the only remains of the Duke of York's servants, from 1662 till the union in October, 1706. Now, having given an account of all the principal actors and plays down to 1706, I will the said union conclude my history ”

When Vanbrugge proposed to enter on this business, he applied not directly to Rich, but to an agent or auxiliary of that person, a remarkable character in his way, “ a sort of premier agent in his stage affairs, that seemed in appearance as much to govern the master as the master himself did to govern his actors, but this person was under no stipulation or salary for the service he rendered, but had gradually wrought himself into the master's extraordinary confidence and trust from an habitual intimacy, a cheerful humour, and

an indefatigable zeal for his interest If I should further say that this person has been well known in almost every metropolis in Europe , that few private men have with so little reproach run through more various turns of fortune , that on the wrong side of threescore, he has yet the open spirit of a hale young fellow of five-and-twenty , that though he still chooses to speak what he thinks to his best friends with an undisguised freedom, he is, notwithstanding, acceptable to many persons of the first rank and condition , that any one of them (provided he likes them) may now send him for their service to Constantinople at half a day's warning , that time has not yet been able to make a visible change in any part of him but the colour of his hair, from a fierce coal-black to that of a milder milk-white ” It was, in short, Mr Owen Swiny,\* thus happily sketched, who, after an

\* In the year 1751, the play of “Henry the Fourth” was acted at the theatre in Drury Lane Barry was the Hotspur , a very beautiful and accomplished actress condescended, in order to give strength to the play, to act the trifling character of Lady Percy , Berry was the Falstaff The house was far from crowded “A very celebrated comic actress triumphed in the barrenness of the pit and boxes , she threw out some expressions against the consequence of the Lady Percy This produced a very cool but cutting answer from the other, who reminded the former of her playing very lately to a much thinner audience one of her favourite parts And now the ladies, not being able to restrain themselves within the bounds of cool conversation, a most terrible fray ensued I do not believe that they went so far as pulling of caps, but their altercation would not have disgraced the females of Bilingsgate While the two great actresses were thus entertaining each other in one part of the green room, the admiral of Lady Percy, an old gentleman who afterwards bequeathed her a considerable fortune, and the brother of the comic lady were more seriously employed The cicisbeo struck the other with his cane, thus provoked, he very calmly laid hold of the old man's jaw ‘Let go my jaw, you villain !’ and ‘Thow down your cane, sir !’ were repeatedly echoed by the combatants. Barry, who was afraid lest the audience should hear full as much of the quarrel as of the play, rushed into the green-room and put an end to the battle ” The printseller laid hold of this dispute and published a print called “The Green room Scuffle ” The celebrated lady was Mrs Woffington, and Swiny her champion , the other was Mrs Clive, and her brother Rafton Davies tells the story Mr Swiny, or M'Swiny, on his return from Italy, procured a place in the custom house, and was also made Keeper of the King's Mews He died on the 2nd of October, 1754

adventurous life, was able to secure a good fortune for his old age, which he bequeathed to Mrs. Woffington. To him Vanbrugge made an offer of his opera-house, at the "casual rent" of 5*l.* every acting night, the whole not to exceed 700*l.* a year. Rich, it seems, was not disinclined, as he would thus really control both.

But now another change was to take place in the direction of Old Drury. Sir Thomas Skipwith was one of the "adventurers" who had advanced money on the patent, and holding equal share with Rich, had long since found himself, like the rest, driven from the control, owing to the arts of his astute manager, who, by proceedings in the courts and other means, had prevented all accounts being furnished.

This Sir Thomas Skipwith, a man about town and fond of pleasure, is connected with a singular heroine, herself connected with the stage, and whose story is of a strange romantic sort. This is Mrs Manley, authoress of "The New Atalantis." She was the daughter of a Royalist knight, who, on his deathbed, bequeathed the care of his two children to his nephew, an unscrupulous young man, whose father had taken the Parliamentary side in the wars\*. As her story makes one of the miserable romances of the stage, it will be found interesting in this place.

This young gentleman had very promising parts; but under the appearance of an open simplicity, he concealed the most treacherous hypocrisy. He had by nature a very happy address, formed to win much upon the heart of unexperienced girls; and his two cousins respected him greatly. He placed them at the house of an old disagreeable aunt, who had been a keen partisan of the royal cause during the civil wars, she was full of the heroic stiffness of her own times, and would read books of chivalry and romance with her spectacles. This

\* The story is told with much spirit in the "Biographia Dramatica."

sort of conversation much infected the mind of our poetess, and filled her imagination with lovers, heroes, and princes. In a few years the old aunt died, and left the two young ladies without control; which, as soon as their cousin, Mr. Manley, heard, he hastened into the country to visit them, and appeared in deep mourning, as he said, for the death of his wife, upon which the young ladies congratulated him, as they knew his wife was a woman of the most turbulent temper, and ill fitted to render the conjugal life tolerable. This gentleman, who had seen a great deal of the world, and was acquainted with all its artifices, lost no time in making love to his cousin, who was no otherwise pleased with it, than as it answered something to the characters she had found in those books which had poisoned and deluded her dawning reason. Soon after these protestations of love were made, the young lady fell into a fever, which had nearly proved fatal.

The lover and her sister never quitted the chamber for sixteen nights, nor took any other repose than throwing themselves alternately upon a little pallet in the same room. Having in her nature a great deal of gratitude, and a very tender sense of benefits, she promised upon her recovery to marry her guardian, which, as soon as her health was sufficiently restored, she performed in the presence of a maid-servant, her sister, and a gentleman who had married a relation.

The husband of our poetess brought her to London, fixed her in a remote quarter of it, forbade her to stir out of doors, or to receive the visits of her sister, or any other relations, friends, or acquaintance. This usage she thought exceedingly barbarous, and it grieved her the more excessively, since she married him only because she imagined he loved and doated on her to distraction, for, as his person was but ordinary, and his age disproportionate, being twenty years older than she, it could not be imagined she was in love with him. She was very uneasy at being kept a prisoner, but her husband's fondness and jealousy were made the pretence. She always loved reading, to which she was now more than ever obliged, as so much time lay upon her hands. Soon after she proved with child, and so perpetually ill, that she implored her husband to let her enjoy the company of her sister and friends.

When he could have no relief from impotunity (being assured that in seeing her relations she must discover his barbarous deceit), he thought it was best to be himself the relator of his villainy, he fell upon his knees before her, with so much seeming confusion, distress, and anguish, that she was at a loss to know what could mould his stubborn heart into such contrition. At last, after venting a thousand well-counterfeited tears and sighs, he stabbed her with the wounding relation of his wife being still alive, and, with a hypocrite's pangs, conjured her to have some mercy on a lost man as he was, in an obstinate, inveterate passion, that had no alternative but death or possession.

With this artful contrition he endeavoured to soothe his injured wife, but what soothing could heal the wounds she had received? Horror! amazement! sense of honour lost! the world's opinion! ten thousand distresses crowded her distracted imagination, and she cast looks upon the conscious traitor with horrible dismay! Her fortune was in his hands, the greater part of which was already lavished away in the excesses of drinking and gaming. She was young, unacquainted with the world, had never experienced necessity, and knew no arts of redressing it, so that, thus forlorn and distressed, to whom could she run for refuge, even from want and misery, but to the very traitor that had undone her? She was acquainted with none that could or would espouse her cause, a helpless, useless load of grief and melancholy!—with child!—disgraced!—her own relations either unable or unwilling to relieve her from this most deplorable state!

Thus was she detained by unhappy circumstances, and his prevailing arts, to wear away three wretched years with him, in the same house, though she most solemnly protests (and she has a right to be believed) that no persuasion could ever again reconcile her to his impious arms. Whenever she cast her eyes upon her son, it gave a mortal wound to her peace, the circumstances of his birth glared full on her imagination, she saw him, in future, upbraided with his father's treachery and his mother's misfortunes. Thus forsaken of all the world, in the very morning of her life, when all things should have been gay and promising, she wore away three wretched years. Meantime her betrayer had procured for himself a considerable

employment, the duties of which obliged him to go into the country where his first wife lived. He took leave of his injured innocent with much seeming tenderness, and made the most sacred protestations that he would not suffer her nor her child ever to want.

When he was gone he soon relapsed into his former extravagances, forgot his promise of providing for his child and its mother, and inhumanly left them a prey to indigence and oppression. The lady was only happy in being released from the killing anguish of every day having before her eyes the object of her undoing.

Our poetess now perceived that, together with her reputation, she had lost all the esteem that her conversation and abilities might have else procured her, and she was reduced to the deplorable necessity of associating with those whose fame was blasted by their indiscretion. We therefore are not surprised to find our authoress under the patronage of the Dutchess of Cleveland, who was justly reckoned one of the most celebrated beauties of that age. She was fond of new faces, and immediately contracted the greatest intimacy with our poetess, and gave her a general invitation to her table. The lady, at whose house the Dutchess came acquainted with Mrs. Manley, soon perceived her indiscretion in bringing them together, for the love of novelty so far prevailed on the Dutchess, that herself was immediately discarded, and the affection formerly bestowed upon her was lavished on Mrs. Manley. This procured our poetess an inveterate enemy, and the greatest blow that was ever struck at her reputation was by that woman, who had been before her friend. She was not content with informing persons who began to know and esteem Mrs. Manley, that her marriage was a cheat, but even endeavoured to make the Dutchess jealous of her new favourite's charms, in respect to Mr. Goodman, the player, who at that time had the honour of approaching her Grace's person.

As the Dutchess of Cleveland was a woman of a very fickle temper, in six months' time she began to be tired of Mrs. Manley; she was quarrelsome, loquacious, fierce, excessively fond, or downright rude; when she was disgusted with any persons she never failed to reproach them with all the bitterness of wit she was mistress of, with such malice and ill-nature

that she was hated by all the world, even her own children and servants ; the extremes of prodigality and covetousness, of love and hatred, of dotage and fondness, were all centred in her.

When our authoress was dismissed by the Dutchess, in the solitude that followed she composed her first tragedy, which was much more praised for the language, fire, and tenderness, than the conduct Mrs Barry distinguished herself in it, and the authoress was often heard to express great surprise, that a man of Mr Betterton's grave sense and judgment should think well enough of the production of a young woman to bring it upon the stage, since she herself, in a more mature age, could hardly bear to read it. But, as the play succeeded, she received such unbounded incense from admirers, that her apartment was crowded with men of wit and gaiety.

They who had a regard for Mrs. Manley could not but observe with concern that her conduct was such as would soon issue in her ruin. No language but flattery approached her ear, the beaux told her that a woman of her wit was not to be confined to the dull formalities of her own sex, but had a right to assume the unreserved freedom of the male, since all things were pardonable to a lady who knew how to give laws to others, yet was not obliged to keep them herself.

Sir Thomas Skipwith, a character of gaiety of those times, and who, it seems, had theatrical connections, was recommended to her as being very able to promote her design in writing for the stage. This knight was in the fiftieth year of his age, and in the sixtieth of his constitution, when he was first introduced to her. Sir Thomas was a weak, vain, conceited coxcomb, who delighted in boasting of his conquests over women, and what was often owing to his fortune and station in life, he imputed to his address and the elegance of his manner, of both which he was totally destitute. He published Mrs. Manley's dishonour, and from that time our sprightly poetess was considered by the sober part of the sex as quite abandoned to all shame.

When her affair with this superannuated knight was over, she soon engaged in another affair prejudicial to her character. It was with one Mr Tilly, a gentleman of the law, who underwent at home many of those severe lectures which the just

provocation and jealousy of his wife taught her to read him. Mrs Tilly at last died, and our gallant was left at his freedom to marry the object of his passion, but unluckily his finances were in such a situation, that he was obliged to repair them by marrying a woman of fortune. This was a cruel circumstance, for he really loved Mrs Manley, and had the felicity of a reciprocal passion. She agreed, however, in order to repair his fortune, that he should marry a rich young widow, whom he soon won by the elegance of his address, while our authoress retired into the country to spend her days in solitude and sorrow, and bid an everlasting farewell to the pleasures of love and gallantry. Mr Tilly did not many years survive this separation. His life was rendered miserable at home by the jealousy of his young wife, who had heard of his affair with Mrs Manley. He lost his senses, and died in a deplorable situation. During her retirement, our authoress wrote her four volumes of the "Memoirs of the New Atalantis," which was meant as a representation of the characters of some of those who had effected the Revolution. A warrant was granted from the Secretary of State's office to seize the printer and publisher of these volumes. This circumstance reduced the writer to a very troublesome dilemma, she could not bear the thought that innocent people should suffer on her account, but nothing could deter her from voluntarily presenting herself before the King's Bench as the author of the "Atalantis." When she was examined before the Secretary (then Lord Sunderland), he was assiduous to know from whom she had got information of some particulars, which they imagined were above her own intelligence. Her defence was made with much humility and sorrow, at the same time denying that any persons were concerned with her, or that she had a further design than writing for her own amusement and diversion in the country, without intending particular reflections or characters. When this was not believed, and the contrary urged against her by several circumstances, she said "Then it must be by inspiration, because (knowing her own innocence) she could account for it in no other way." The Secretary replied "That inspiration used to be upon a good account, and her writings were stark naught." She, with an air of penitence, acknowledged, "That his lordship's observation might be true; but that there were

evil angels as well as good ; so that, nevertheless, what she had wrote might still be by inspiration ” In consequence of this examination she was shut up in a messenger’s house, without being allowed pen, ink, and paper However, her counsel sued out her *habeas corpus* at the King’s Bench bar, and she was admitted to bail She was discharged, after several times exposing herself in person, to cross the court before the bench of judges, with her three attendants, the printer and two publishers

Not long after this a total change of the Ministry ensued , the statesmen to whose hate she had been obnoxious were removed, and consequently all her fears upon that score dissipated. She then came into great favour with their successors, and was employed in defending the Tory measures pursued in the four last years of the Queen After Dean Swift relinquished “The Examiner,” she continued it with great spirit for a considerable time ; and frequently finished pieces begun by that excellent writer, who also often used to furnish her with hints for those of her own composition At this time, or soon afterwards, she became connected with Alderman Barber, who was then the favourite Tory printer, and with him she resided until the time of her death, which happened on the 11th of July, 1724, at his house on Lambeth Hill She was buried in the middle aisle of the church of St Bennet, Paul’s Wharf, where a marble grave-stone was erected to her memory.

Returning now to Sir Thomas Skipwith, we find him seriously embarrassed with a property that only caused him loss and trouble. In sheer disgust, or in a moment of *gareté du cœur*, this gentleman actually gave his property away ! In the month of October, 1707, he happened to be on a visit with a gentleman of his acquaintance in the country, a gay young man of most attractive manners, fond of the theatre, with a fortune of about 2000/ a year, which he had already “dipped” a little He had “uncommon share of sociality, a handsome person, and a sanguinary bloom on his complexion ” And it is characteristic that what drew him behind

the scenes was a longing for the pattern of a "certain "fair, full-bottomed periwig" he had admired on the head of Mr Cibber in "The Fool in Fashion" He introduced himself to the actor with a request to know the price of it, "but upon his observing me a little surprised at the levity of his question, about a fop's periwig, he began to rally himself with so much wit and humour upon the folly of his fondness for it, that he struck me with an equal desire of granting anything in my power to oblige so facetious a customer This singular beginning of our conversation, and the mutual laughs that ensued upon it, ended in an agreement to finish our bargain that night over a bottle" Both were delighted with each other's company; that single bottle "was the sire of many a jolly dozen" He seems to have been a most attractive gentleman "I have heard a gentleman of condition say, who knew the world as well as most men that live in it, that, let his discretion be ever so much upon his guard, he never fell into Mr Brett's company without being loath to leave it, or carrying away a better opinion of himself from it" This fascination operated on the guest, and "the pleasantness of the place, and the agreeable manner of passing his time there, had raised him to such a gallantry of heart that, in return to the civilities of his friend the colonel, he made him an offer of his whole right in the patent; but not to overrate the value of his present, told him he himself had made nothing of it these ten years. But the colonel (said he) being a greater favourite of the people in power, and (as he believed) among the actors too, than himself was, might think of some scheme to turn it to advantage, and in that light, if he liked it, it was at his service After a great deal of raillery on both sides of what Sir Thomas had *not* made of it, and the particular advantages the colonel was likely to make of it, they came to a laughing resolution that an instrument should be drawn the

next morning of an absolute conveyance of the premises A gentleman of the law, well known to them both, happening to be a guest there at the same time, the next day produced the deed, and it was duly sealed and signed”

#### TRANSFER OF THE PATENT

This Indenture made the 6<sup>th</sup> day of Oct<sup>r</sup> in the 6<sup>th</sup> yeare of the 1eigne of our Sovereigne Lady Anne by the gracie of God Queen of Great Britaine France and Ireland Defender of the Faith anno que dui 1707 between Sr Thomas Skipwith of the parish of St Martin's-in-the-Fields in the county of Midd<sup>x</sup> barr of the one part and Henry Brett of Sandywell in the county of Gloucester Esq of the other part Whereas our late Sovereign Lord King Charles the 2<sup>nd</sup> by his Letters Pattents witnessed by himself at Westminster of his speciall grace and meer motion did give and grant and for himself his heires and successouis did give and grant unto Sr William Davenant K N T his heires and assignes for ever speciall licence full power sole privilege and authority that he the said S<sup>t</sup> William Davenant his heires and assignes and every of them their deputy and deputy's servants and agents and such others as the said Sr William Davenant his heires and assignes should at any time agreee with or employ on or about the same time by his other Letters Pattents witnessed as aforesaid at Westminster in like manner give and grant unto . . . Killigrew Esq his deputy deputy's servants and agents the like privilege of acting all sorts of stage-plays operas interludes and all other entertainments as is aforesaid in the other in part recited Letters Pattents mentioned and that the said Killigrew should hold and enjoy the benefitt proffitt and advantages thereof as in and by the said last-mentioned Letters Pattents relation being thereunto had may more fully and at large appeare which said last-mentioned Letters Pattents were by some deed or instrument in writing conveyed or assigned by the said . Killigrew to Charles Davenant son and heir of the said S<sup>t</sup> William Davenant in whom after the said William's death the said first in part recited Letters Pattents

were allsoe vested or that both the said in part recited Letters Pattents afterwards became vested in the said Charles Davenant or some person or persons in trust for him and whereas the said Chailes Davenant conveyed all his right title and interest in the premises to Alexander Davenant brother to the said Charles his heires and assignes for ever Sir Thomas Skipwith did as forwards for a good and valuable consideration become a purchaser of a very considerable shae or shares or proportion of the benefitt and advantage of the said two in part recited Letters Pattents and the same were thereupon assigned or conveyed to him or person or some persons in trust for him his heires and assignes for ever And whereas the said Sir Thomas Skipwith did since purchase severall other shares or rents of severall persons who by virtue of severall sums of money lent to the then Patentee or Patentees were to receive from the growing profitts of the benefit of the said in part . Letters Pattents a certain share or proportion shares or proportions By virtue whereof and of the said beforementiond in part and . Letters Pattents or some other Letters Pattents or by some other legall ways or means the said Sir Thomas Skipwith is or some person in trust for him is seised or . or has a considerable interest right share shares rent or proportion in the benefitt or advantage that shall or may arise by virtue of the said in part . Letters Pattents as aforesaid or any other Letters Pattents for the sole acting of stage-plays operas or interludes Now this Indenture witnesseth that the said Sir Thomas Skipwith in consideriation of the friendship love and affection which he hath and beareth to the said Henry Brett and in consideriation of the sum of ten shillings to him in hand paid by the said Henry Biett at or befoie the . and delivery hereof the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged and allso for diverss other goods and valluable considerations the said Sir Thomas Skipwith thereunto especially moving he the said Sir Thomas Skipwith hath given granted transferred assigned sett over released and confirmed and by these presents doth clearly and absolutely give grant transferr assigne sett over release and confirm unto the said Henry Brett his heires and assignes to the only use and behoof of the said Henry Brett his heires and assignes for ever

And whereas the said Sir Thomas Skipwith did afterwards for a good and valluable consideration become a purchaser of a very considerable share or shares or proportion of the benefitt and advantage of the said two in part recited Letters Pattents and the same were thereupon assigned or conveyed to him or some person or persons in trust for him his heires or assigns for ever And whereas the said Sir Thomas Skipwith did since purchase severall other shares or rents of severall persons who by virtue of severall sums of money lent to the then Patentee or Patentees were to receive from the growing pioffitts of the benefitt of the said in part recited Letters Pattents a certaine share or proportion shares or proportions By vntue whereof and of the said before-mentioned in part recited Letters Pattents or some other Letters Pattents or by some other legal ways or meanes the said Sir Thomas Skipwith is or some person in trust for him is seised or possessed or has a considerable interest right share shares rents or proportions in the benefit or advantage that shall or may arise by virtue of the s<sup>d</sup> in part recited Letters Pattents as afores<sup>d</sup> or any other Letters Pattents for the sole acting of stage plays operas or interludes

Now THIS INDENTURE witnesseth that the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith in consideration of the friendship love and affection which he hath and beareth to the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett and in consideration of the sum of ten shillings to him in hand paid by the said Henry Brett at or before the sealing (?) and delivery hereof the receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged and allso for divers other good and valuable consideration the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith thereunto especially moving he the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith hath given granted transferred assigned sett over released and confirmed and by these presents doth hereby and absolutely give grant transfer assign sett over release and confirm unto the s<sup>d</sup> Heniy Brett his heires and assigns to the only use and behoof of the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett his heires and assigns for ever ALL THIS THE SAID Sir Thomas Skipwith's right title and interest of in and to the said Letters Pattents herein before in part recited or any other Letters Pattents or any other deed or instrument in law wherein the said Sir Thomas Skipwith or his deputys or agents can claim or may have any right interest power property claim and de-

mand whatsoever to act or promote the acting of stage-plays  
operas and interludes and also all the right title interest share  
or shares rent proportion or proportions property claims and  
demand whatsoever of him the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith  
therein in as full and ample manner and form to all intents and  
purposes as he the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith by virtue of the  
s<sup>d</sup> in part recited Letters Pattents or any other Letters  
Pattents conveyances assignments deeds gifts bargains sales  
and assurances in the law might or could have hold or enjoy  
the same if this present Indenture had not been made To HAVE  
AND TO HOLD all and singular the      premises aforesaid with  
the appurtenances and every part thereof unto the s<sup>d</sup> Henry  
Brett his heires and assigns for ever And the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas  
Skipwith doth for himself his heires exors and admrs covenant  
promise grant and agree to and with the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett  
his heires and assigns And the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith  
hath not at any time heretofore made done or committed or  
suffered to be made done or committed any act matter  
cause or thing whatsoever whereby or by means whereby  
the premises aforesaid are or may be encumbered in title  
charge estate or otherwise howsoever but that the s<sup>d</sup> Sir  
Thomas Skipwith hath now in himself good right full power  
and lawfull and absolute authority to grant and convey the  
premises aforesaid with their and every of their appur-  
tenances and unto the said Henry Brett his heires and assigns  
according to the purport true intent and meaning hereof  
and in such manner as aforesaid and that it shall and may  
be lawfull to and for the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett his heires and  
assigns from time to time and at all times for ever here-  
after to have hold occupy possess and enjoy the premises  
hereinbefore mentioned and intended to be granted and  
assigned and every part thereof without his lawful lett rent  
trouble or interruption of him the said Sir Thomas Skipwith  
his heires exors administrators or assigns or of any other  
person or persons claiming by from or under him or them  
free and bear and freely and neaily requitte and discharge  
of and from all rents and charges whatsoever and further  
that he the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith and his heires and every  
other person or persons claiming under him shall and will  
from time to time and at all times hereafter at the request

and at the cost and charges in the law of the said Henry Brett doe make and execute all and every such further and other act and acts conveyances and assurances in the law whatsoever for the further better and more perfect conveying and assuring of all and singular the said premises mentioned and intended to be granted and assigned and every part and parcell thereof with their appurtenances unto the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett his heires and assignes as by the counsel of the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett learned in the law shall be reasonably devised advised or required and furthermore that the said Sir Thomas Skipwith his heires executors and admr<sup>s</sup> shall and will in or before the five and twentieth day of November next ensuing the date hereof yield and deliver up to the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett his heires or assignes all such Letters Pattents assignments conveyances and assurance in the law writings deeds and evidences whatsoever touching and concerning the premises beforemention'd which the said Sir Thomas Skipwith hath now in his own custody or possession or which hereafter he may have or come by on or by reason of any suit in law or equity or otherwise howsoever And whereas severall Letters Pattents deeds writings conveyances evidences and transcripts whatsoever the title of the said Sir Thomas Skipwith to the premises afores<sup>d</sup> not being at present in the hands and custody of the said Sir Thomas Skipwith but that the same or greatest part thereof are now in the custody of Christopher Rich Esq or some other person or persons in trust for the said Sir Thomas Skipwith whereby and by means whereof the severall rentales herein above mention'd of such Letters Pattents deeds writings conveyances evidences and transcripts whatsoever cannot be so perfectly recited and mentioned as if the same were at the execution of these presents produced by the said Sir Thomas Skipwith and by means whereof the same may be liable to severall mistakes and omissions nevertheless the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith being minded and willing to make as good and absolute a conveyance of the premises to the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett in such manner as aforesaid as is possible soe as neither the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith or his heires or any person or persons claiming to be from or under him should ever hereafter mollest the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett his heires or assignes in

the quiete enjoyment thereof now therefore the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith both for himself his heires exors<sup>s</sup> and admrs<sup>s</sup> covenant promise grant and agree to and with the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett his heires and assignes that neither the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith his heires exors<sup>s</sup> administrators or any person or persons claiming from him or them shall not nor will not for ever hereafter take any advantage of any error or errors mistake or mistakes omission or omissions in the indenture or conveyance for or by reason of any misrecitall or nonrecitall or for or by reason of any matter cause or thing whatsoever but that the same shall and may from henceforth and for ever hereafter be quietly and peaceably enjoyed by the said Henry Brett his heires as if this present indenture in all and every respects and particulars had been more perfectly made and furthermore that the said Henry Brett may more easily come at or have the possession of the said writings and evidences aforesaid in case the same cannot be got without suit in law or equity the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Thomas Skipwith doth hereby make constitute and appoint if need be the said Henry Brett his good and lawfull attorney thereby empowering him irrevocably in the name of the said Sir Thomas Skipwith or in the name of the s<sup>d</sup> Henry Brett but for the sole benefit of the said Henry Brett his heires and assignes to ask demande sue for and recover of and from the said Christopher Rich or any other person or persons in whose hands or custody they are or may be all and every the writings deeds evidences and transcripts whatsoever touching or concerning the same and the same when gott or recovered to keep for ever hereafter for the use of the said Henry Brett his heires and assignes for ever  
IN WITNESS whereof the said parties to these presents have interchangeably sett their hands and seals this day and yeare first above written

THOMAS SKIPWITH  
H. BRETT

[Sir Thomas Skipwith's assignment of all his interest in the playhouse 6th October 1707 ]

Colonel Brett once met with a curiously adventurous, or rather romantic story. Spence tells us he "was a particular

handsome man" Lady Rivers, looking out of a window, saw him arrested by a bailiff, paid his debt, and married him. She left him well off at her death, on which he bought an estate, built a house, but over-exciting himself in travelling to see it, during the heats, he caught a fever and died. "Nobody had a better taste of what would please the town, and his opinions were much regarded by the actors and dramatists" It is also said that Cibber introduced a pleasant incident from his life in one of his comedies.

This fine gentleman being now invested with this new office and authority, there were serious difficulties before him, on which he consulted his friend the player, than whom no one knew better Mr Rich's temper. This adviser directed him to take a firm position at once, to appear to take an interest, and understand and control, though he might not, and above all, to get the actors back again from the Haymarket, and recreate the old monopoly, making that theatre the house of opera. This he now actually contrived to do through his influence at Court.

The manifest wish to crush the old patentees was presently shown by a fresh order of the Chamberlain, Lord Kent, dated December 31st, 1707

As by division of the comedians into two distinct houses players were not able to gain a reasonable subsistence, for their encouragement in either company, nor can plays be always acted to the best advantage, whereas the charge of opera and comedies at the same house is too great to be supported

Therefore to remedy these inconveniences and for better regulation and support of the theatres, I do hereby order and require

All operas to be at the Haymarket, with full power and authority to the manager to engage any performers in music, dancing, etc. And I do hereby strictly charge and forbid the manager to represent any comedies, tragedies, or any other

entertainments of the stage, or to erect any other theatre for the purpose, upon pain of being silenced for breach of this my order.

I do hereby give to the management of the theatres in Drury Lane and Dorset Gardens full powers to engage any actors they may think fit, in spite of any articles or engagement they may have made with any other playhouse. This forbids operas and dancing at these theatres on pain of being silenced

And for greater encouragement of the above-named theatres, I do further order and require that no person, society, or company of undertakers whatever do presume to erect any other theatre, or to represent comedy, tragedy, or operas . . . as they shall answer this contrary at their peril.\*

Here was a fresh stretch of despotism, but the Court was growing every year more daring in its attempts at control. Almost at once the players received orders to return to Drury Lane, there to remain (under the patentees) Her Majesty's only company of comedians.

When the Drury Lane comedians heard that it was intended to compel them to join with this decayed and failing company, they were thrown into a state of consternation. It will be seen that there was no resource open to them but to obey. They supported their manager's remonstrances by the following petition

The humble Petition of the comedians acting at the Theatre Royal, in Drury Lane, to the Earl of Kent, Lord Chamberlain, showeth That Mr Rich having from Sir John Stanley received your lordship's commands to send his proposals for a union of the two playhouses, according to Her Majesty's royal pleasure, signified to your lordship, it is with the utmost reluctance that your petitioners make this most humble address to your lordship, but they having, by their long labour and diligence (notwithstanding many discouragements) improved

\* Brit Mus Ad. MS 20,726

themselves into an able and entire company, to the general satisfaction of the town, and being fully content with the terms and conditions under which they now act, are absolutely convinced that a union of the two companies cannot be without great prejudice, if not utter ruin, to them and their numerous families Your petitioners therefore most humbly pray that your lordship will be pleased to represent to Her Majesty the many unavoidable hardships which they conceive will be brought upon them in case your lordship should exert your power to unite them to the other company, who never having shown the same diligence, industry, nor disposition to please their audiences, that we presume to think we have done, now seek to support themselves by the successful labours of your petitioners, contrary, as we have reason to believe, to the intention of the nobility and gentry who subscribed to the building of a new theatre, and to the frequent encouragement given by them to the support of the two houses

This was duly signed—and it may be presumed the signatures comprise the whole company

Rob Wilks, Phil. Griffin, Rich Estcourt, Jos Williams, William Pinkethman, Wm. Jones, Wm. Bullock, Hen Morris, John Bickerstaff, Ric Cross, Fran M Knight, Jane Rogers, Thos Kent, James Carnaby, Colley Cibber, John Mills, Amee Oldfield, Let Cross, Hen Fairbank, Theoph Keen, René Cheirier, La Forest, L Ramondon, Mary Powell, Henrietta Moore, Diana Temple, Eliz Sapsford, Mary Kent, Mary Lindsey, Su. Mountfort, Margt Mills, Marianna Smith, Kath Finch

On January 13th, 1708, the company once more left the Haymarket, and were able to give out at Drury Lane, "By the United Company of Comedians," which included Wilks, Mills, Booth, Cibber, Johnson, Estcourt, Betterton, Bickerstaff, Pinkethman, Bullock, Keene, Crosse, Fairbanks, Pack, Smith, Husband, Dogget, Leigh, Thurmond, Bowen; Mrs. Knight, Mountfort, Barry, Rogers, Norris, Oldfield, Bradshaw,

Powell, Porter, Cross, Saunders, Wills, Bicknell, Moore. We are further told that the whole company did not appear at first, Powell and Thurmond owing to gout and infirmities, and Betterton now acting but seldom. The public then welcomed with their plaudits their long-admired veteran, while he on his part displayed all his form, judgment, and genius.

Everything went well at first, and to the satisfaction of all, save Mr Rich “For now every chief actor, according to his particular capacity, piqued himself upon rectifying those errors which, during their divided state, were almost unavoidable. Such a choice of actors added a richness to every good play, as it was then served up to the public entertainment. The common people crowded to them with a more joyous expectation, and those of the higher taste returned to them as to old acquaintances with new desires, after a long absence. In a word, all parties seemed better pleased but he who one might imagine had most reason to be so—the (lately) sole managing patentee. He, indeed, saw his power daily mouldering from his own hands into those of Mr. Brett, whose gentlemanly manner of making everyone’s business easy to him threw their old master under a disregard, which he had not been used to, nor could, with all his happy change of affairs, support. Although this grave theatrical minister, of whom I have been obliged to make such frequent mention, had acquired the reputation of a most profound politician, by being often incomprehensible, yet I am not sure that his conduct at this juncture gave us not an evident proof that he was like other frail mortals, more a slave to his passions than his interest; for no creature ever seemed more fond of power that so little knew how to use it to his profit and reputation, otherwise he could not possibly have been so discontented in his secure and prosperous state of the theatre, as to resolve at all hazards to destroy it. We shall now see what

infallible measures he took to bring this laudable scheme to perfection. He plainly saw, that as this disagreeable prosperity was chiefly owing to the conduct of Mr Brett, there could be no hope of recovering the stage to its former confusion but by finding some effectual means to make Mr. Brett weary of his charge. The most probable he could, for the present, think of in this distress, was to call in the adventurers (whom for many years, by his defence in law, he had kept out) now to take care of their visibly improving interests. This fair appearance of equity, being known to be his own proposal, he rightly guessed would incline these adventurers to form a majority of votes on his side in all theatrical questions, and consequently become a check upon the power of Mr Brett, who had so visibly alienated the hearts of his theatrical subjects, and now began to govern without him. When the adventurers, therefore, were readmitted to their old government, after having recommended himself to them by proposing to make some small dividend of the profits (though he did not design that jest should be repeated), he took care that the creditors of the patent, who were then no inconsiderable body, should carry of the every week's clear profits in proportion to their several dues and demands."

Sir Thomas Skipwith, finding that the theatre was prospering, naturally repented of his rash gift, and insisting that the deed was meant to be a trust one, took proceedings in equity to get back his property. Colonel Brett, who seems to have been a gentleman, gave way, and, it is said, on Sir Thomas's death, retransferred it to his son Sir George.

We find from another document that Brett had devised his whole authority to Wilks, Estcourt, and Cibber himself, who makes no mention of this delegation. This paper shows how, after the fashion of a military commission, the authority

over the players was formally transferred. It had, of course, nothing to do with our patent.

By an indenture dated March 31st, 1708, between Henry Brett, Esq., and Robert Wilks, Richard Estcourt, and Colley Cibber, gentlemen, Brett deputed Wilks, Estcourt, and Cibber to perform plays new or old, "to take in, discharge, advance, take down, encourage and forfeit all actors, officers, servants, or agents" No sum was to be expended that exceeded in one week 40*s* but with consent of all three. They covenanted to use their skill and endeavour to support the right of the patent, and after June 10th following there was to be "no benefit day or play," without depositing with the treasurer 40*l*. An actor whose salary did not amount to 4*l*, to leave in the treasurer's hands one part in four of his clear profits of such benefit play, an actor who had not 50*s*, a full third part; and those not above 40*s*, one moiety or half for use and benefit of the patent, and of his business in general. Not to be any benefit play before the last week in February, and not more than one in a week from said last week in February to the month of May next following. The latter clauses show that Rich had no warrant for the harsh proceedings towards the players with which he was charged.

When Wilks, for a time, had been thus made stage-manager, it is stated in "The Laureate" that the players were so subordinate that he had been obliged to challenge several and fight them. In the company was a strange dissipated man named Powell. This riotous, rollicking, quarrelsome fellow had talents, and figured in "Cato" and other important plays, but was always in brawls. When he saw that Wilks was disdaining him, he sent him a challenge, but was pacified. He would be excited with liquor even on the stage, and go through all manner of extravagances. He was ever in debt, and so hunted

by the sheriff's officers that he usually walked the streets with his sword in his hand (sheathed), *in terrorem* to his pursuers. If he saw any of them at a distance he would roar out, "Get on the other side of the way, you dog!" and the bailiff, who knew his old customer, would most obligingly answer, "We do not want you *now*, Master Powell." He was alive in the year 1717.

The Chamberlain, about the middle of King William's reign, had issued an order that no actor should leave one house to go to the other without a discharge \* Powell carelessly set it at naught, left Drury Lane and went to Lincoln's Inn, and returned to Drury Lane without discharge. "On this, halt a little here, on this side of the question the order was to stand in force, and the same offence against it now was not to be equally passed over. He was the next day taken up by a messenger, and confined to the porter's lodge, where, to the best of my remembrance, he remained about two days, when the managers of Lincoln's Inn Fields, not thinking an actor of his loose character worth their further trouble, gave him up; though, perhaps, he was released for some better reason."

A more singular instance of the discipline maintained by the Chamberlain is the following. "The same actor was provoked at Will's Coffee-house, in a dispute about the playhouse affairs, to strike a gentleman whose family had been sometimes masters of it, a complaint of this insolence was, in the absence of the Lord Chamberlain, immediately made to the Vice-Chamberlain, who so highly resented it that he thought himself bound in honour to carry his power of redressing it as far as it could possibly go for Powell having a part in the play that was acted the day after, the Vice-Chamberlain sent an order to

\* Bellchambers, Cibber's editor, points out that this was already decided in the patent, and therefore superfluous. But the Chamberlain was the executive, and had to reiterate the same order again and again.

silence the whole company for having suffered Powell to appear upon the stage, before he had made that gentleman satisfaction, although the masters of the theatre had had no notice of Powell's misbehaviour. However, this order was obeyed, and remained in force for two or three days, till the same authority was pleased, or advised, to revoke it."

Even a more violent stretch of arbitrary power is recorded in the case of so respectable a man as Dogget, who pressed to have his agreement drawn up "fair and binding, but, finding that the managers were not above-board, he quitted the stage and went away into the country, on which appeal was made to the Chamberlain. A messenger was immediately despatched to Norwich, where Dogget then was, to bring him up in custody, but doughty Dogget, who had money in his pocket and the cause of liberty at his heart, was not in the least intimidated by this formidable summons. He was observed to obey it with a particular cheerfulness, entertaining his fellow-traveller, the messenger, all the way in the coach (for he had protested against riding) with as much humour as a man of his business might be capable of tasting. And as he found his charges were to be defrayed, he, at every inn, called for the best dainties the country could afford, or a pretended weak appetite could digest. At this rate they jollily rolled on, more with the air of a jaunt than a journey, or a party of pleasure, than of a poor devil in durance. Upon his arrival in town, he immediately applied to the Lord Chief Justice Holt for his *habeas corpus*. As his case was something particular, that eminent and learned minister of the law took a particular notice of it, for Dogget was not only discharged, but the process of his confinement (according to common fame) had a censure passed upon it in court."

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE REVOLT AGAINST RICH.

HAVING got rid of Brett, who was a man of honour, Rich adopted his old tactics towards the performers, reducing their "salaries," "forfeiting" them, and at last forced them to sign a paper agreeing to the sacrifice of the third of the benefit profits. On this a fresh scene of confusion broke out. Once more we are to see how the control of the Crown could be exercised, effectively in a logical point of view, but most arbitrarily and unreasonably, for on June 6th an order arrived, in the name of His Majesty, requiring the theatre to be closed, and to continue closed until further notice. The object was, of course, to punish the patentee for disobedience to a direction to satisfy his actors. Yet it punished them infinitely more.

Moody, in a letter dated March, 1798, said he had the following details from the brother of John Rich "Rich the father was an attorney, and had a client to whom Sir Thomas Skipwith owed a large sum. Rich, meeting the attorney of the latter, demanded payment. The other declared that the only asset was a patent to act plays by. They agreed to put it up by auction, and Rich bought it for 80*l*. It was sold again in the lifetime of Christopher Rich at the rate of 80,000*l.*, for the present proprietors gave Mr. Colman 20,000*l.* for his quarter. This Moody had from C. Rich at

Mr. Coomby's in Cook's Court, twenty-five years ago. No receipt having passed, they had to give Sir T. Skipwith's relatives a large sum to substantiate the property" But this refers to Covent Garden Theatre

The patentees on this dispute found it necessary to direct their treasurer to furnish this interesting and curious statement of accounts, showing what salaries were paid, and how little justice the players had on their side.

1709 Advertisement concerning the poor actors, who, under pretence of hard usage from the patentees, are about to desert their service. Some persons having industriously spread about amongst the quality and others what small allowances the chief actors have had this last winter from the patentees of Drury Lane Playhouse, as if they had received no more than so many poor Palatines, it was thought necessary to print the following account. The whole company began to act on the 12th October, 1708, and left off on the 26th of the same month, by reason of Prince George's illness and death, and began again on the 14th December following, and left off, upon the Lord Chamberlain's order, on 4th June last, 1709, so acted during that time in all 135 days, which is twenty-two weeks and three days, accounting six acting days to a week

For that time—	£	s	d
To Mr Wilks, by salary for acting and taking care of the rehearsals, paid . . . . .	168	6	8
By his benefit play . . . . .	90	14	9
	<hr/>		
	£259	1	5
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To Mr Betterton, by salary for acting 4 <i>l</i> a week for himself and 1 <i>l</i> for his wife, although she does not act, paid . . . . .	112	10	0
By a benefit play at common prices, besides what he got by high prices and guineas, paid	76	4	5
	<hr/>		
	£188	14	5
<hr/>			

	£	s	d
To Mr Estcourt, at 5 <i>l</i> a week salary, paid .	112	10	0
By a benefit play, paid . . . . .	51	8	6
	<u>£163</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>

	£	s	d
To Mr Cibber, at 5 <i>l.</i> a week salary, paid .	111	10	0
By a benefit play . . . . .	51	0	10
	<u>£162</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>10</u>

	£	s	d
To Mr. Mills, at 4 <i>l</i> a week for himself and 1 <i>l</i> a week for his wife, for little or nothing .	112	10	0
By a benefit play, paid to him (not including therein what she got by a benefit play)	58	1	4
	<u>£170</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>4</u>

	£	s	d
To Mrs Oldfield, at 4 <i>l</i> a week salary, which for fourteen weeks and one day, she leaving off acting presently after her benefit, viz on the 17th March last, 1708, though the benefit was intended for the whole nine months' acting, and she refused to assist others in their benefits, her salary for these fourteen weeks and one day came to, and she was paid . . . . .	56	13	4
In January she required and was paid ten guineas, to wear on the stage, in some plays during the whole season, a mantua petticoat that was given her for the stage, and though she left off three months before, she hath not yet returned any part of the ten guineas	10	15	0
And she had for wearing in some play a suit of boy clothes on the stage, paid . . . . .	2	10	7
By a benefit play, paid . . . . .	62	7	8
	<u>£132</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>

	£	s	d
Certainties in all . . . . .	1077	2	2

Note here Mr Betterton having had 76*l* 4*s* 5*d*, £ s d  
as above mentioned, for two-thirds of the profits by a benefit play, reckoning his tickets for the boxes at 5*s* apiece, the pit at 3*s*, the first gallery at 2*s*, and the upper gallery at 1*s*. But the boxes, pit, and stage laid together on his day, and no person admitted by his ticket, the lowest at half-a-guinea a ticket, nay, he had much more, for one lady gave him ten guineas, some five guineas, some two guineas, and most one guinea, supposing that he designed not to act any more, and he delivered tickets out for more persons than the boxes, pit, and stage could hold. It is thought he cleared at least 450*l* over and besides the 76*l* 4*s* 5*d*

'Tis thought Mr Estcourt cleared, besides the said 51 <i>l</i> 8 <i>s</i> 6 <i>d</i>	450	0	0
That Mr Wilks cleared by guineas, as it is thought, about 40 <i>l</i> , besides the said 90 <i>l</i> 14 <i>s</i> 9 <i>d</i>	200	0	0
That Mr Cibber got by guineas, as it is thought, about 50 <i>l</i> , besides the said 51 <i>l</i> 0 <i>s</i> 10 <i>d</i>	40	0	0
That Mr Mills got by guineas about 20 <i>l</i> as it is thought, besides the said 58 <i>l</i> 1 <i>s</i> 4 <i>d</i>	50	0	0
That Mrs Oldfield, it is thought, got 120 <i>l</i> by guineas over and above the said 56 <i>l</i> 13 <i>s</i> 4 <i>d</i>	20	0	0
In all . . . . .	120	0	0
	180	0	0

So that these six comedians who are the unsatisfied people have, between the 12th October and 4th June, cleared.

	£	s,	d
Wilks . . . . .	299	0	0
Betterton . . . . .	638	0	0
Estcourt . . . . .	363	0	0
Cibber . . . . .	212	0	0
Mills . . . . .	190	0	0
Oldfield . . . . .	252	0	0
	<hr/>		
	£1957	0	0

July 8, 1709

ZACHARY BAGGS,  
Receiver and Treasurer.\*

After the first order had been given to Rich, judgment was, as it were, stayed to give time for reflection, and it was further conveyed to the actors that if they chose to desert, they would be encouraged and protected at the other house. This notification came from the Chamberlain's office. Of this advice they were not slow to profit, and a confederacy was formed, including Wilks, Dogget, Mrs. Oldfield, and Cibber, who proposed to join Swiny at the Opera House. All were to be "sharers," or *sociétaires*, except the lady, who was excluded by the pleasant Dogget, on the ground that things could not go well if more than one sex was admitted to the management. She had already had a *carte blanche* instead. The plot being thus arranged, the manager proceeded in his course, little suspecting what was in store for him and what a blow was to fall on him.

When a sufficient number of actors were engaged, under our confederacy with Swiny, it was then judged a proper time for the Lord Chamberlain's power to operate. All this while the other party were passively silent, until one day the actor who had particularly solicited their cause at the Lord Chamberlain's office, being shown there the order signed for absolutely silencing the patentees and ready to be served, flew back with the news to his companions. Then at the rehearsal, in which he had been wanted, when being called to his part, and something hastily questioned by the patentee for his neglect of business, this actor, I say, with an erected look and a theatrical spirit, at once threw off the mask, and roundly told him. "Sir, I have now no more business here than you have, in half an hour you will neither have actors nor command, nor authority to employ them." The patentee, who, though he could not readily comprehend his mysterious manner of speaking, had just a glimpse enough of terror from the words to soften his reproof into a cold formal declaration, that "if he could not do his work he should not be paid." But now, to complete the catastrophe of these theatrical commotions, enters the messenger with the order of silence in his hand, whom the same actor officially introduced, telling the patentee that the

gentleman wanted to speak to him from the Lord Chamberlain. When the messenger had delivered the order, the actor, throwing his head over his shoulder towards the patentee, in the manner of Shakespeare's Henry the Eighth to Cardinal Wolsey, cried "Read o'er that! and now—to breakfast, with what appetite you may." The authority of the patent now no longer subsisting, all the confederating actors immediately walked out of the house, to which they never returned until they became themselves the tenants and masters of it. Here again we see a higher instance of the authority of a Lord Chamberlain than any of those I have elsewhere mentioned.

On this we find a number of excited petitions addressed to Her Majesty by the persons of quality interested, and imploring redress. One signed by

The Right Hon. Lord Guilford, the Right Hon. Lord John Harvey, Dame Alice Brownlow, widow, Ann Shadwell, widow, Sir Edward Smith, Bart., Sir Thomas Skipwith, Bart., George Sayer, Charles Killigrew, and Christopher Rich, Esquires, Charles Davenant, Doctor of Laws, John Metcalf, Thomas Goodall, Ashburnham Toll, Ashburnham Trowd, William East, Richard Middlemore, Robert Gower, and William Collier, Esquires, and several other persons claiming under the patents of the theatres. This petition states the particulars of the patents granted to Thomas Killigrew, Esq., and Sir William Davenant—that the patentees did build two playhouses upon several pieces of ground purchased by them respectively, the one in Covent Garden and the other in Salisbury Court, *which cost them 10,000l and upwards, and the house in Covent Garden having been accidentally burnt down, and afterwards rebuilt, cost near 4000l more,* and that the patentees did, at their own costs, maintain and instruct people for the stage. That the patents were united in 1682, and the then patentees, for great sums of money, assigned their shares, or interests (now vested in the petitioners). That the petitioners, in confidence of such letters patent, had been at further expense, at several times, in apparel and other necessaries for the theatre, *to the extent of 20,000l.* That the petitioners, after paying all the necessary

expenses of the establishment, derived an annual profit of above 1000*l* from the concern, until Lady Day, 1695, since which time they became yearly considerable losers. That they were at last, with the greatest reluctance, compelled to trouble Her Majesty with an application to prevent their being brought into danger of losing their whole estates in the said premises, but they hoped that, in a reign so glorious as that of Her Majesty for preserving the rights of the people, they should not be disturbed in the management of their concern. That Her Majesty's Lord Chamberlain had sent several orders to the patentees and their managers, players, and performers, and in particular during the months of November and December, 1705, *relating to the establishing of another playhouse, and restraining the petitioners' power to treat with such actors as they should think necessary for their business.* Other orders were sent them in December and January, 1707, for restraining the petitioners from acting any operas, and from employing such persons as they conceived fit for dancing and singing, under the penalty of silencing. On April 30th, 1709, the petitioners' treasurer was ordered to pay moneys to their actors, without their consent or agreement, and on June 6th last the petitioners and actors were silenced for not so doing. That such orders were not only extraordinary and contradictory in themselves, but made without calling the petitioners before their lordship, or hearing them upon the subject, and, as they the petitioners were advised, contrary to the rights and privileges conveyed by the patents, and tended to subvert the same, and destroy the property of those claiming under them, and as the petitioners were refused redress by the Lord Chamberlain, although they frequently applied for the same, they at last had recourse to Her Majesty's great justice and goodness. They therefore prayed Her Majesty for relief against the said orders, and to restore them to that protection which they enjoyed under her royal predecessors.

The italicised portions show some interesting facts. Next came Mr Charles Killigrew,

Stating that his father's right of the patent had been vested in him for the last twenty-seven years. That for the greatest

part of the time since the two houses were united, Dr Davonant, or those claiming under him, took upon themselves the management of the two theatres, and the company of actors, and received the profits arising from the concein, which ought to have been divided into twenty equal shares, three parts of which belonged to the petitioner That, as his share of the property was at the time of his marriage looked upon to be of considerable value, it formed a part of the settlement made upon his wife and their issue He therefore hoped that, as he had not interfered with the management of the theatre for the last fourteen years, Her Majesty would not allow his family to suffer through the use of the patent being suspended

Also a petition from the unfortunate "silenced" actors—

B Booth, Theo Keene, Jno Bickerstaffe, Fran Leigh, Hen Fairbank, Ja Cainaby, Jo Downes, Geo Powell, George Paik, John Cowdy, Thomas Hairman, Mat Burkhead, Fran M Knight, M Bicknell, Henrietta Moore, Kat Finch, Susannah Cox, L Bradshaw, Mary Powell, Eli Leigh, Elis Willis, M Kent, Cath Baker—all performers at Drury Lane Theatre—states that the Chamberlain having an unhappy difference with the patentees and managers occasioned by the intricate proceedings of some particular dissatisfied comedians, did on June 6th last silence patentees, by which comedians were reduced to the lowest want They petitioned Lord Chamberlain June 10th, June 20th, July 5th, so now appeal to the Queen That they had not incurred the Lord Chamberlain's displeasure, as his lordship has been often pleased to declare, on the order and rules of decency That the patentees, who his lordship declares are the only offenders, sustain no damage by this suspension at this time of the year, having no power or profit from July 10th to October 10th, as appears by the articles of agreement—that time being for the young comedians at their own risk. The only redress he gives is to allow managers in Haymarket to receive and employ such of *your Majesty's sworn comedians* as they think fit to take But they could not do it, as such an engagement is opposed to their interest and inclinations, and also forfeit of their honesty to their masters, and would expose them to penalties for breach of agreement. For, having power and authority from the Lord

Chamberlain by an order dated December 31st, 1707, to be received, taken in, and employed by the patentees of Drury Lane, did agree to act there and nowhere else, so must be inevitably ruined if they do not act at Drury Lane That both patentees and they are fully contented with each other So petition that, notwithstanding Lord Chamberlain has some power over them as being your Majesty's sworn servants, hope they will not be brought into a worse condition than other of your Majesty's subjects who enjoy the property and benefit of honest and lawful care They also inform the Queen they reap no advantage by salary, livery, or any other consideration (as the sworn comedians formerly have done under your Majesty's royal predecessors), so that your Majesty's petitioners look upon themselves as left to their own liberties to make the best provision they can for the maintenance of themselves and their families, and do not despair of your Majesty's royal favour and protection while they shall behave themselves with decency and modesty in their several capacities Hope carries this deplorable case into your wise and tender consideration That the Lord Chamberlain's displeasure may not extend to the utter ruin of your Majesty's innocent petitioners and their families, which must certainly follow unless you give leave to act at Drury Lane while the quarell is arranged Highest charity to above one hundred persons—Booth, Th. Keene, J. Bickerstaffe, F. Leigh, Hen. Faubank, Carnaby, Downes, Powell, Knight, Henrietta Moore, Kath. Finch, Susan Cox, L. Bradshaw, Mary Powell, Eliz. Leigh, Eliz. Willis, M. Kent, Cath. Baker

But now there appears on the scene a new figure, who seems to have profited by this, and according to the following story to have secured the oyster, leaving the shells to the litigants This was Mr. Collier, a "civilian" and a Member of Parliament. He had influence enough at Court to carry through any arrangement that he pleased, and presently made his own terms with the players He made various successive arrangements, which he altered and cancelled as he found them unprofitable He first fancied the opera at the Hay-

market, and agreed 'to exchange with Swiny, the Lord Chamberlain favouring, but he required 200*l* a year to be paid to him, and one night in the week *relâche* to give his opera a fairer chance. This was agreed to, and both started on a new race "After the comedians were in possession of Drury Lane, their swarm of audiences exceeded all that had been seen in thirty years before, which, however, I do not impute so much to the excellence of their acting as to their indefatigable industry" This the civilian noted, and "then, like a true liquorish courtier, began to meditate an exchange of theatrical posts with Swiny, who had visibly very fair pretensions to that he was in, by his being first chosen by the Court to regulate and rescue the stage from the disorders it had suffered under its former managers. Yet Collier knew that sort of merit could stand in no competition with his being a Member of Parliament. He therefore had recourse to his Court interest (where mere will and pleasure was the only law that disposed of all theatrical rights)" Poor Swiny was advised that it was vain to resist, and was driven abroad to foreign countries to begin a new career.

From the curious papers preserved in the British Museum we can gather all the incidents that followed this mixture of violence and chicanery The appeal was heard in presence of the Queen herself in Council at St James's, on February 18th, 1709. "The petition of Dame Brownlow and others was read against the silencing order and the licence lately granted to one Mr Collier (who pretended to have some rights under the patents, and formerly associated with petitioners for the preservation of his properties), to act plays and receive the benefit and exclude all persons claiming under the letters patent An order made to be referred to Attorney-General and Solicitor-General."

In October, 1711, the law officers, Northey and Raymond,

gave an opinion, when they reported that they had heard the parties to the matter They reviewed all the patents from the beginning with the revolution of title to 1690, when "Rich was now seized" They showed that the clear profits of a single year, ending June, 1709, amounted to over 1000*l*, "after three parts in twenty thereof being taken out, as belonging to Charles Killigrew, the rest being divided into ten parts, Rich claiming only two parts of such ten shares, the other eight belonging to the other petitioners claiming as mortgagees or purchasers, for whom the said John Rich admits himself as only trustee for them" The "opinion" then goes on to set out how, on "September 6th, 1709, Sir John Stanley wrote to Rich and the actors that they were not to play any more till another order, and this order of your Majesty was because they had presumed to publish bills for a play to be acted by such company, notwithstanding an order of June 6th, 1709, made by the Lord Chamberlain, by which the said company was silenced for not obeying a former order, dated April 30th, whereby patentees' treasurer was required to pay to the respective comedians who had benefit plays that winter all the moneys produced by such plays, deducting only 10*l* each play for the charge of the house That the said Rich, besides such charge, stopped one-third of the receipts for the use of the company, and so did not obey, alleging the comedians had a particular agreement with him in writing, and that the patentees were not obliged to submit to an order by the Lord Chamberlain, who is not so much as named or mentioned in the letters patent, took on himself to dispose of the money of the proprietors without their consent. Rich and the company yielded full obedience to the royal order"

He continued in possession, "forborne to act ever since," till November 22nd, 1709, "when Mr. Collier came with a corporal and divers soldiers," two files of musketeers, "armed

with swords and muskets, and in a violent manner broke open the doors of the said theatre, turned out Rich's servants, and declared he had your Majesty's order took possession of the scenes, clothes, etc , and acted ever since ''

Collier justified his proceedings by a letter from Sir J. Stanley, dated November 19th, 1709 The whole was most extraordinary and significant, and was indeed a battle between the Court and its opponents.

November 19, 1709.

My Lord Chamberlain has directed me to acquaint you that in consideration of your having surrendered all your interest and claims to the patents granted Mi Killigrew and Sir W. Davenant, and your submission to Her Majesty's authority, Her Majesty is graciously pleased to permit you to act comedies and tragedies in the theatre in Drury Lane, the first play not to be acted before Wednesday next, being the 23rd instant And I am further to acquaint you that Her Majesty's licence empowering you accordingly is preparing, and will be speedily sent you, and you are strictly required by his lordship *not to suffer Mr. Rich or any other person claiming under the aforesaid patents to be any way considered in the management of that company of comedians under this direction.* You are also surely required to observe all such regulations as have been made for the better government of Her Majesty's Theatre, more particularly Her Majesty's order forbidding any *person to come behind the scenes or stand upon the stage.\**

There was also added an affidavit made by Collier, dated January 8th, 1710

Who swore that in the year 1709, the Chamberlain having silenced the players, he, Collier, being a sharer in the patents, having consulted his and the other titles to said patents, was advised said patents were of no effect *unless supported by Crown.* So he and Sir T Skipwith declined acting or joining in opposition to the Queen's pleasure Later was told that the Queen,

if he would submit, and waive patents, or surrender them, would give leave to act. So Collier and Skipwith did so, and Collier actually surrendered his title-deed to the Solicitor-General In November, 1709, he had leave to employ the players, who at that time were in a very low condition, and on or about the 22nd day of the said month, November, it being a day of public rejoicing, he ordered a bonfire to be made before the playhouse-door, and gave the players money to drink your Majesty's health, and the then Lord Chambeilain's, and to rejoice for the victory which was that day commemorated. And that he came that evening to the playhouse, and showed the players Sir John Stanley's letter, and told them they might act as soon as they pleased, for that he had the Queen's leave to employ them Upon which the players themselves and some soldiers got into the playhouse, and the next day performed a play, but not the play that was given out, for Rich had carried away the clothes, so they were forced to play in their own clothes till stage-clothes could be got for them Collier said also, he had the consent of the major part of the renters to get into the said house, and they all received their share, he said, and Rich has received his as well as the others, it being left in the office for him till June last, when Rich and others turned him out, and held it in opposition to proprietors till November last, when Collier again got into possession. Collier holds it by leave from the major part of the renters, and hath let the same to Mr. Swiny, Mr. Wilks, Mr. Dogget, and Mr. Cibber, who now play in virtue of Her Majesty's licence. Collier swears that he never said he had the Queen's authority for anything, but to employ the players, to maintain their families, and divert the town. Nor did he send for, nor know of the soldiers being there, until he saw them. He received no advantage from players all last year, but gave all the receipts to players, to maintain them and their families, in compassion to them, and in obedience to the Queen to support her prerogative in opposition to the said patentees.

The Attorney-General notes that the lease, however, bears date November 15th, 1710, more than a year after the forcible entry, that being on November 22nd, 1709 So Attorney and Solicitor Generals humbly testify that Collier hath not

proved or produced to us any right or title he had claiming under said letters patent

This specious account of the shifty lawyer was not consistent in other matters For

The patentees, to make out that Collier declined to act with them in preservation of their properties under patents, and to show the sentiment he expressed of the Lord Chamberlain's proceedings, and of the validity of the patent at time of its being silenced, proceeded to use his older letters.

" September 13th, 1709.

" Sir,—Yours I received, and am as much surprised at the late order sent as you can be. I thought that matters had been so settled that you would have met with no other interruption from playing than to have one taken and then to be bailed, in order to try the validity of the Lord Chamberlain's order against the patents I must do Sir J Stanley the justice that he did not consent that we should play, but if we did it was also used as above, and that was all we desired, and that was the Lord Chamberlain's own method, and, as I apprehended, the only way to satisfy everybody that it is pretty plain his lordship's methods are regarded, and it is very difficult to know who to obey. There is a secret in this matter which time will bring to light. In the meantime, I cannot see we have anything to do but to petition the Queen in our names, and set forth the whole matter, which, when rightly stated, I am of opinion Her Majesty will readily do us justice, who are so very much injured and oppressed against reason, justice, and all the known laws of the land "

Then adds, he cannot come to town, but will join with whatever Mr Rich, Wodall, and Metcalfe and rest shall think fit to do.

" I will consent too for Sir Thomas Skipwith and myself, for matters are now carried so high that I think it impracticable to sue for favour by any other method than the rules of Westminster Hall Only first to petition the Queen that Her Majesty will be pleased to try our right under her ancestor's

patent, and that she will countenance us in such manner as the kings and queens of England have always done, and not suffer her subjects to be injured and oppressed by any private person put in authority under her. It is the undoubted right of the subject to be heard before he is condemned, but we have execution passed and executed upon us without any legal trial or sentence given. I would have the matter carried on the strictest manner it can be, and since we are to receive no favour, not to give any, nor to spare anyone of what quality or distinction soever, this offer to make an ill use of the Crown's power. I am sorry that anyone should suffer for being firm to his own engagements and undertakings, especially yourself. For my part, I will do all I can to protect you. I contribute in proportion to keep you and the rest that stand by the patents, in spite of anyone's private interest. I hope the Queen will not by any means be persuaded to act in an arbitrary way, it being what she always has abhorred, ever since her glorious and auspicious reign. I am in no manner of pain but we shall have justice done us, and ample satisfaction made for the violence used in the affair. If you write to me, let your letter be left, and my clerk will read it to me. My humble services to all friends, and believe me to be your assured friend and humble servant,

“W. COLLIER”

The pleasant editor of “The Tatler,” who was some years later to take his full share in the theatrical disputes, seemed to have a special antipathy to Rich, and in his journal ridiculed these proceedings :

This is to give notice, that a magnificent palace, with great variety of gardens, statues, and waterworks, may be bought cheap in Drury Lane, where there are likewise several castles to be disposed of, very delightfully situated, as also groves, woods, forests, fountains, and country seats, with very pleasant prospects on all sides of them, being the movables of Ch—r R—ch, Esq., who is breaking up housekeeping, and has many curious pieces of furniture to dispose of, which may be seen between the hours of six and ten in the evening.

*The Inventory*

Spirits of right Nantz brandy, for lambent flames and apparitions Threee bottles and a half of lightning One shower of snow in the whitest French paper. Two showers of a browner sort A sea, consisting of a dozen large waves, the tenth bigger than ordinary, and a little damaged A dozen and a half of clouds trimmed with black, and well conditioned A rainbow a little faded. A set of clouds after the French mode, streaked with lightning and furbelowed. A new moon, something decayed A pint of the finest Spanish wash, being all that is left of two hogsheads sent over last winter. A coach very finely gilt, and little used, with a pair of dragons, to be sold cheap A setting sun, a pennyworth An imperial mantle, made for Cyrus the Great, and worn by Julius Cæsar, Bajazet, King Harry the Eighth, and Signor Valentini A basket-hilt sword, very convenient to carry milk in. Roxana's night-gown. Othello's handkechief, etc etc.

On another occasion he thus describes the violent proceedings of Rich, under the name of Divito

I have ever had the sense of the thing, and for that reason have rejoiced that my ancient coeval friend of Drury Lane, though he had sold off most of his movables, still kept possession of his palace, and trembled for him when he had lately likely to have been taken by a stratagem There have for many ages been a certain learned sort of unlearned men in this nation called attorneys, who have taken upon them to solve all difficulties by increasing them, and are called upon to the assistance of all who are lazy, or weak of understanding The insolence of a ruler of this place made him resign the possession of it to the management of my above-mentioned friend Divito was too modest to know when to resign it, till he had the opinion and sentence of the law for his removal Both these in length of time were obtained against him. But as the great Archimedes defended Syracuse with so powerful engines, that if he threw a rope or piece of wood over the wall, the enemy fled, so Divito had wounded all adversaries with so much skill, that men feared even to be in the right against him.

For this reason the lawful ruler sets up an attorney to expel an attorney, and chose a name dreadful to the stage, who only seemed able to beat Divito out of his entrenchments

On the 22nd instant, a night of public rejoicing, the enemies of Divito made a laugess to the people of faggots, tubs, and other combustible matter, which was erected into a bonfire before the palace. Plentiful cans were at the same time distributed among the dependences of that principality, and the artful rival of Divito observing them prepared for enterprise, presented the lawful owner of the neighbouring edifice, and showed his deputation under him War immediately ensued upon the peaceful empire of wit and the muses, the Goths and Vandals sacking Rome, did not threaten a more barbarous devastation of arts and sciences. But when they had forced their entrance, the experienced Divito had detached all his subjects and evacuated all his stores. The neighbouring inhabitants report that the refuse of Divito's followers marched off the night before disguised in magnificence, dooikeepers came out clad like cardinals, and scene-drawers like heathen gods. Divito himself was wrapped up in one of his black clouds, and left to the enemy nothing but an empty stage, full of trap-doois, known only to himself and his adherents.

This other new licence (Cibber tells us) being now in possession of the Drury Lane Theatre, those actors, whom the patentee ever since the order of silence had retained in a state of inaction, all to a man came over to the service of Collier Of these, Booth was then the chief The merit of the rest had as yet made no considerable appearance, and as the patentee had not left a rag of their clothing behind him, they were but poorly equipped for a public review, consequently, at their first opening, they were very little able to annoy us But during the trial of Sacheverell our audiences were extremely weakened by the better rank of people daily attending it, while at the same time the lower sort, who were not equally admitted to that grand spectacle, as eagerly crowded into Drury Lane to a new comedy, called "The Fair Quaker of Deal" This play, having some low strokes of natural humour in it, was rightly calculated for the capacity of the actors who played it, and to the taste of the multitude, who

were now more disposed and at leisure to see it, but the most happy incident in its fortune was the claim of the Fair Quaker, which was acted by Miss Santlow (afterwards Mrs. Booth), whose person was then in the full bloom of what beauty she might pretend to. Before this she had only been admired as the most excellent dancer, which perhaps might not a little contribute to the favourable reception she now met with as an actress in this character, which so happily suited her figure and capacity. The gentle softness of her voice, the composed innocence of her aspect, the modesty of her dress, the reserved decency of her gesture, and the simplicity of the sentiments that naturally fell from her, made her seem the amiable maid she represented.

These are but a few touches in Cibber's happy manner, but they give pleasing impressions of the lady, whom we shall meet again presently

An advertisement in the papers, dated January 14th, 1713, tells the disastrous finale of the Swiny management "Mr. Swiny breaks and runs away, and leaves the singers unpaid, and the scenes and habits (of a new opera) also unpaid for. The singers were in some confusion, but at last concluded to go on on their own account."

We find Sir S Vanbrugh writing from Castle Howard, November 20th, 1713; endorsed, "About the playhouses." "I troubled you lately with a letter relating to the comedy stock in Drury Lane I am since informed you have directed the present manager to lay before you an inventory of what was conveyed from the Haymarket I hope they will give you a right one If they do, you will see it was the richest and completest stock that ever any company had in England, consisting of all that was in Lincoln's Inn Fields (for which I gave 500*l*)," etc.

## CHAPTER VIII

### BETTERTON AND HIS FELLOW-PERFORMERS

THE stage was now to suffer a heavy loss in the death of that great actor Betterton, who, after suffering much from gout, expired on the 28th of April, 1710, at the age of seventy-five. Many have considered Betterton the greatest actor of the English stage, but comparison in the line of descent, and not between living actors, is vain and impossible. Those who praise the old actors are praising the enjoyments of their youth or manhood—a part of themselves. The few who had seen Garrick and Betterton could only compare a beginner with a veteran. Pope was introduced to him when very young, and was so captivated that he drew his portrait, which “curio” was in the possession of Lord Mansfield at Caenwood. This amiable, generous man retained his popularity to the end, and the pleasant Steele describes a scene in the playhouse not long before the actor’s death.

On Thursday last (April 8th) was acted, for the benefit of Mr Betterton, the celebrated comedy, called “Love for Love.” Those excellent players, Mrs Barry, Mrs Bracegirdle,\* and Mr Dogget, though not at present concerned in the house,

\* At this performance the prologue and epilogue were spoken by Miss Bracegirdle.

acted on that occasion. There has not been known so great a concourse of persons of distinction as at that time, the stage itself was covered with gentlemen and ladies, and when the curtain was drawn, it discovered even there a very splendid audience. This unusual encouragement, which was given to a play for the advantage of so great an actor, gives an undeniable instance that the true relish for manly entertainments and rational pleasures is not wholly lost. All the parts were acted to perfection, the actors were careful of their carriage, and no one was guilty of the affectation to insert witticisms of his own, but a due respect was had to the audience for encouraging this accomplished player. It is not now doubted but plays will revive, and take their usual place in the opinion of persons of wit and merit, notwithstanding their late apostacy in favour of dress and sound.

The loss of this eminent performer also prompted a pleasing tribute on the part of Steele, a description which has been often quoted, and which is the best testimonial to the merits of Betterton.

Having received notice that the famous actor Mr Betterton was to be interred this evening in the cloysters near Westminster Abbey, I was resolved to walk thither and see the last office done to a man whom I had always very much admired, and from whose action I had received more strong impressions of what is great and noble in humane nature than from the arguments of the most solid philosophers, or the descriptions of the most charming poets I had ever read.

He then goes on to sketch the great player's particular gifts :

There is no humane invention so aptly calculated for the forming a free-born people as that of a theatre. Hence it is, that I extremely lament the little relish the gentry of this nation have at present for the just and noble representations in some of our tragedies. The operas, which are of late introduced, can leave no trace behind them that can be of service beyond the present moment.

I have hardly a notion that any performer of antiquity could surpass the action of Mr Betterton in any of the occasions in which he has appeared on our stage. The wonderful agony which he appeared in when he examined the circumstance of the handkerchief in "Othello," the mixture of love that intruded upon his mind upon the innocent answers Desdemona makes, betrayed in his gesture such a variety and vicissitude of passions as would admonish a man to be afraid of his own heart, and perfectly convince him, that it is to stab it, to admit that worst of daggers, jealousy. Whoever reads in his closet this admirable scene, will find that he cannot, except he has as warm an imagination as Shakespeare himself, find any but dry, incoherent, and broken sentences; but a reader that has seen Betterton act it, observes there could not be a word added, that longer speeches had been unnatural, nay impossible, in Othello's circumstances. The charming passage in the same tragedy, where he tells the manner of winning the affection of his mistress, was urged with so moving and graceful an energy, that while I walked in the cloysters I thought of him with the same concern as if I waited for the remains of a person who had in real life done all that I had seen him represent. The gloom of the place, and faint lights before the ceremony appeared, contributed to the melancholy disposition I was in, and I began to be extremely afflicted.

Betteiton, even at this long interval, it is not difficult to appreciate, so warm and abundant are the testimonies to his merits. He was truly a remarkable man, a character of power, and, it may be added, that all who have succeeded greatly on the stage have joined to their histrionic gifts certain commanding managing qualities that helped them to force their way.

Betterton was well known for his courtesy to authors and his friendly help, so that, like the modern poet of memory, Rogers, he was often styled the poet's banker. A wonderful

the daughter of a friend who had ruined him by persuading him to embark his fortune in an East Indian venture. This lady was Mrs Bowman. "He was incapable," says Aston, in a quaint passage, "of dancing even in a country dance. He was the most extensive actor from Alexander to Sir John Falstaffe, but in the last character he wanted the waggery of Estcourt, the drollery of Harper, and sallaciousness of Jack Evans. But then Estcourt was too trifling, Harper too much of the Bartholomew Fair, and Evans misplaced his humour. Thus you see what flaws are in bright diamonds. As Hamlet, when he threw himself at Ophelia's feet, he appeared a little too grave for a young student, and his repartees seemed rather as apothegms from a sage philosopher than the sporting flashes of a young Hamlet, and no one else could have pleased the town, he was rooted in their opinion." Comparing, then, Betterton with Powell—always a good mode of suggesting the qualities of a player—and adding that Betterton was sixty-three, Powell forty, he says, "that Powell lost his credit altogether, outrav'd all probability, outheroding Herod, while Betterton kept his passion under, and shew'd it most (as flame smoaks most when stifled). Betterton, from the time he was dressed to the end of the play, kept his mind in the same temperament and adaptness as the present character required." Mrs Barry was Betterton's favourite. "They were both never better pleased than in playing together . . . and yet this fine creature was not handsome, her mouth opening most on the right side, which she strove to draw t'other way, and at times composing her face as if sitting to have her picture drawn. Mrs. Barry was middle-sized, and had darkish hair, light eyes, dark eyebrows, and was indifferently plump. Her face somewhat preceded her action, as the latter did her words, her face ever expressing the passions. not like the actresses of later times, who are afraid of putting their faces out of the

form of non-meaning, least they should crack the cerum, whitewash, or other cosmetic, tiowl'd on Neither she nor any of the actors of these times had any tone in their speaking (too much lately in use) In tragedy, she was solemn and august, in free comedy, alert, easy, and genteel, pleasant in her face and action, filling the stage with variety of gesture She was woman to Lady Shelton of Norfolk (my godmother) when Lord Rochester took her on the stage, where for some time they could make nothing of her." It will be noted what a happy fertility of illustration is here, which indeed marks most theatrical writers and describers of actors, as Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, Talfourd, and others.

Unfortunately, he had not succeeded in enriching himself, though this benefit, with another, brought him, Davies says, 1000*l*

Mrs Betterton was the faithful companion and fellow-labourer of this great comedian for more than five-and-forty years She excelled in comedy and tragedy "Her understanding was solid and her address gentle and polite, while her husband instructed the noble male performers in Crowne's 'Calisto,' acted at Court in 1675, she gave lessons to the Princesses Mary and Anne, daughters of James Duke of York, and Mrs. Sarah Jennings, afterwards the famous Duchess of Marlborough She likewise taught the Princess Anne the part of Cassandra in the tragedy of 'Mithridates,' which was also acted at Court. Betterton was naturally of a cheerful disposition, and had a very high confidence in Providence The wife was of a thoughtful and melancholy temper, she was so strongly affected with his death that she ran distracted, though she appeared rather a prudent and constant than a fond and passionate wife. They had no children. William Betterton, said to be his son, and who was drowned while bathing at Wallingford in 1662, was a man very near as old as

himself A lady, intimately acquainted with Mrs Betterton, states, that for some time before her death she recovered her senses." Again the amiable Steele made an appeal

The mention I have here made of Mr Betterton, for whom I had, as long as I have known anything, a very great esteem and gratitude for the pleasure he gave me, can do him no good, but it may possibly be of service to the unhappy woman he has left behind him, to have it known that this great tragedian was never in a scene half so moving, as the circumstances of his affairs created at his departure. His wife, after the cohabitation of forty years in the strictest amity, has long pined away with a sense of his decay, as well in his person as his little fortune, and in proportion to that she has herself decayed both in her health and reason Her husband's death, added to her age and infirmities, would certainly have determined her life, but that the greatness of her distress has been her relief, by a present depravation of her senses. This absence of reason is her best defence against age, sorrow, poverty, and sickness I dwell upon this account so distinctly, in obedience to a certain great spirit who hides her name, and has by letter applied to me to recommend to her some object of compassion, from whom she may be concealed.

This, I think, is a proper occasion for exciting such heroick generosity, and, as there is an ingenuous shame in those who have known better fortune to be reduced to receive obligations, as well as a becoming pain in the truly generous to receive thanks in this case, both those delicacies are preserved, for the person obliged is as incapable of knowing her benefactress as her benefactress is unwilling to be known by her.

The result of this excellent and powerful appeal was not long in following, and the widow was given a benefit at the theatre.\*

In a pleasant note to his "History of the Stage," Mr.

\* On December 9th, the actor's collection of prints, drawings, and paintings was advertised to be sold by auction.

Dibdin gives us the opinion of one of the old officers of the house as to Betterton's merits "In the early part of my life I was very fond of everything dramatic, and particularly curious to learn whatever I could relative to the Old School as it was then called, but which appellation is now given to the School of Garrick. During the two last years of Rich's life, old Stoe, who was at that time eighty, and who had been many years prompter of Covent Garden Theatrical, was my theatrical mentor. He was a most fervid advocate for the preceding race of performers, and did not spare Rich, who had lowered the stage by pantomimes and buffoonery. This was the very time when Rich was getting up the Coronation. I heard, therefore, of course, all his sentiments, which, though somewhat bigoted, were pretty candid, and his opinion of Betterton was that, though he allowed all his various merits as they had been described by Cibber and his other admirers, yet, taking everything into consideration, he was by no means equal to Garrick."

At this point it may be interesting to see what was the quality of the actors who were flourishing at the beginning of the century. There is a peculiar entertainment for intellectual persons in looking at portraits, and more entertainment still is to be found in studying portraits of actors. The actor is the trained professor of expression, which the ordinary "sitter" is inexperienced in, he can call up for his painter the most perfect representation of emotion or humour. An hour spent in the Garrick Club, where there are hundreds of these admirable presentations, scenes from plays, faces filled with shrewdness and fun, is almost like being at a play itself. Next in charm come those verbal sketches of players in which our language is tolerably rich. It is extraordinary, indeed, how facile does this art become, and how it inspires even indifferent handicraftsmen. Set a writer to describe the

expression of an ordinary face and its fitful changes as some humorous passage has occurred, and nothing will be found so difficult. We seem to want words—or rather there are no words—to fit the delicate *nuances* which seem impalpable. On the other hand, let us see a player interpreting in fine style scenes like those in the immortal "School for Scandal," and the spectacle kindles even the most prosaic. There are admirable descriptive passages of this kind by inferior men. In truth, good dramatic criticism, such as the remarkable observations of a German traveller on Garrick and other English players, first noticed by Mr Tom Taylor, are perhaps the next best thing to real acting.

The transitory nature of the charm of acting, the impossibility of fixing its colours upon canvas, has been often bewailed. The utmost that can be hoped for is to have the impressions of some sagacious observer, with a pen quick to follow his observation, where this sagacity is present, the entertainment for the reader in some faint degree approaches that imparted by the original performance "Pity it is," says Cibber, "that the momentary beauties flowing from an harmonious elocution cannot, like those of poetry, be their own record! That the animated graces of the player can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that presents them, or at best can but faintly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few surviving spectators"

Some of the old critics, when everything was in a rude state, by their graphic power give evidence that acting was then at a far higher stage than it is now; the conventional and diluted style of our present style of writing only reflects the decay of acting. There was a vivacity, a firmness, a grasp of character, that would have high merit now even in practised writers. But then men simply recorded what they observed. Three

were prompters—Downes, Chetwood, and Victor, a third was an admirable writer as well as actor, viz Colley Cibber Gildon seems to have been merely a playgoer We have nothing so good as these men until the days of Lamb

It was at this early period, viz in the eighteenth century, there appeared three or four little volumes, almost pamphlets, but quaintly written and to the point These rarities comprise Downes' "Roscius Anglicanus," Gildon's "Historia Histrionica,"\* with a couple more which might be very well reprinted in a volume.

Cibber, however, is admitted to have had the most masterly touch of all in his style of limning. His whole gallery of actors and actresses would fill too much space, but the more striking passages will find a welcome from the reader. The firm, masterly English, and his weighty, vivid, expressive words will be noted. He begins with Betterton. I have put in italics what seems most significant

These actors, whom I have selected from their contemporaries, were all original masters in their different style, *not mere auricular imitatoirs of one another, which commonly is the highest merit of the middle rank*, but self-judges of nature, from whose various lights they only took their true instruction. Betterton was an actor as Shakespeare was an author, both without competitors. You have seen a Hamlet,

\* Of this curious little tract, "Historia Histrionica," Dr J Warton says he never saw but a single copy "Cartwright was the first collector of old English plays, whose collection is preserved at Dulwich, and James Wright and our author followed his example In the preface are written these happy remarks 'Old plays will always be read by the curious, if it were only to discover the manners and behaviour of several ages and how they altered For plays are exactly like portraits drawn in the garb and fashion of the times when painted You see one habit in the time of Charles I, another quite different from that, both for men and women, in Queen Elizabeth's time, another under Henry VIII, different from both And so back, and all various, and in the several fashions of behaviour and conversation there is as much mutability as in that of clothes—a quaint and charming passage'"

perhaps, who, on the appearance of his father's spirit, has thrown himself into all the straining vociferation requisite to express rage and fury, and the house has thundered with applause, though the misguided actor was all the while (as Shakespeare terms it) tearing a passion into rags. For you may observe that, in this beautiful speech, the passion never rises beyond an almost breathless astonishment, or an impatience, limited by filial reverence, to inquire into the suspected wrongs that may have raised him from his peaceful tomb, and a desire to know what a spirit so seemingly distressed might wish or enjoin a sorrowful son to execute towards his future quiet in the grave. This was the light into which Betterton threw this scene, which he opened with a pause of mute amazement; then rising slowly to a solemn trembling voice, *he made the ghost equally terrible to the spectator as to himself.*

There cannot be a stronger proof of the charms of harmonious elocution, than the many even unnatural scenes and flights of the false sublime it has lifted into applause.

When glory, like the dazzling eagle stood,  
Perched on my beaver in the granick flood,  
When fortune's self my standard trembling bore,  
And the pale fates stood frightened on the shore,  
When the immortals on the billows rode,  
And I myself appeared the leading god

When these flowing numbers came from the mouth of a Betterton, the multitude no more desired sense to them than our musical connoisseurs think it essential in the celebrated air of an Italian opera

The voice of a singer is not more strictly tied to time and tune than that of an actor in theatrical elocution—*the least syllable too long, or too slightly dwelt upon, in a period, depreciates it to nothing.* I never heard a line in tragedy come from Betterton wherein my judgment, my ear, and my imagination were not fully satisfied, which, since his time, I cannot equally say of any one actor whatsoever. The person of this excellent actor was suitable to his voice, more manly than sweet, not exceeding the middle stature, inclining to be

corpulent, of a serious and penetrating aspect, his limbs nearer the athletic than the delicate proportion, yet, however formed, there arose from the harmony of the whole a commanding mien of majesty.

Next of Kynaston But above this tyrannical, tumid superiority of character there is a grave and rational *majesty* in Shakespeare's "Harry the Fourth," which, though not so *glaring to the vulgar eye, requires twice the skill and grace to become and support* Of this real majesty Kynaston was entirely master, here every sentiment came from him as if it had been his own, as if he had himself that instant conceived it, as if he had lost the player and were the real king he performed—a perfection so rarely found, that very often, in actors of good repute, a certain vacancy of look, manly of voice, or superfluous gesture shall unmask the man to the judicious spectator This true majesty Kynaston had so entire a command of that when he whispered the following plain line to Hotspur, "Send us your prisoners, or you'll hear of it!" he conveyed a more terrible menace in it than the loudest intemperance of voice could swell to But let the bold imitator beware, for without the look, and just elocution that waited on it, an attempt of the same nature may fall to nothing

Of Mountfort. A younger man by twenty years, and at this time in his highest reputation, was an actor of a very different style, of person he was tall, well made, fair, and of an agreeable aspect; his voice clear, full and melodious, in tragedy he was the most affecting lover within my memory In comedy he gave the truest life to what we call the fine gentleman; his spirit shone the brighter for being polished with decency. In scenes of gaiety he never broke into the regard that was due to the presence of equal or superior characters, though inferior actors played them, *he filled the stage not by elbowing and crossing it before others, or disconcerting their action, but by surpassing them in true and masterly touches of nature* He never laughed at his own jest, unless the point of his raillery upon another required it He had a particular talent in giving life to *bons mots* and repartees *The wit of the poet seemed always to come from him extempore,*

delivering it He had himself a good share of it, or what is equal to it, with a lively pleasantness of humour

Of Sandford. He might properly be termed the Spagnolet of the theatre, an excellent actor in disagreeable character. But poor Sandford was not the stage-villain by choice, but from necessity, for having a low and crooked person, such bodily defects were too strong to be admitted into great or amiable characters, so that whenever, in any new or revived play, there was a hateful or mischievous person, Sandford was sure to have no competitor for it. And so unusual had it been to see Sandford an innocent man in a play, that whenever he was so, the spectators would hardly give him credit in so gross an improbability. Let me give you an odd instance of it, which I heard Mountfort say was a real fact A new play (the name of it I have forgot) was brought upon the stage, wherein Sandford happened to perform the part of an honest statesman The pit, after they had sat three or four acts, in quiet expectation that the well-dissembled honesty of Sandford (for such of course they concluded it) would soon be discovered, or at least from its security involve the actors in the play in some surprising distress or confusion, which might raise and animate the scenes to come, when, at last, finding no such matter, but that the catastrophe had taken quite another turn, and that Sandford was really an honest man to the end of the play, they faulily damned it, as if the author had imposed upon them the most frontless or incredible absurdity

Nokes was an actor of a quite different genius from any I have ever read, heard of, or seen, since or before his time, and yet his general excellence may be comprehended in one article, viz a plain and palpable simplicity of nature, which was so utterly his own, that he was often as unaccountably diverting in his common speech as on the stage. I saw him once giving an account of some table-talk to another actor behind the scenes, which a man of quality accidentally listening to, was so deceived by his manner, that he asked him if that was a new play he was rehearsing. It seems almost amazing that this simplicity, so easy to Nokes, should never be caught by any one of his successors But Nokes was so singular a species, and was so formed by nature for the stage, that I question if (beyond the trouble of getting words by heart) it ever cost him

an hour's labour to arrive at that high reputation he had, and deserved

He scarce ever made his first entrance in a play but he was received with an involuntary applause, not of hands only, for those may be, and often have been, partially prostituted and bespoken, *but by a general laughter which the very sight of him provoked and nature could not resist, yet the louder the laugh, the graver was his look upon it, and sure, the ridiculous solemnity of his features were enough to have set a whole bench of bishops in a titter.* In the ludicrous distresses, which by the laws of comedy folly is often involved in, he sunk into such a mixture of piteous pusillanimity and a consternation so ruefully ridiculous and inconsolable, that when he had shook you to a fatigue of laughter, it became a moot point whether you ought not to have pitied him *When he debated any matter by himself, he would shut up his mouth with a dumb studious pout, and roll his full eye into such a vacant amazement, such a palpable ignorance of what to think of it, that his silent perplexity (which would sometimes hold him several minutes) gave your imagination as full content as the most absurd thing he could say upon it \**

His person was of the middle size, his voice clear and audible, his natural countenance grave and sober; but the moment he spoke, the settled seriousness of his features was utterly discharged, and a dry, drolling, or laughing levity took such full possession of him, that I can only refer the idea of him to your imagination In some of his low characters that became it, he had a shuffling shamble in his gait, with so contented an ignorance in his aspect, and an awkward absurdity in his gesture, that had you not known him you would not have believed that naturally he could have had a grain of common sense

Leigh He was of a mercurial kind, and though not so strict an observer of nature, yet never so wanton in his performance as to be wholly out of her sight In humour he loved to take a full career, but was careful enough to stop short, when just upon the precipice, he had great variety in

\* The late Mr Buckstone seems to have been the last who possessed this facial power Munden before him had it to an extraordinary degree The French "comics" of our day cultivate it successfully.

his manner, and was famous in very different characters in the canting, grave hypocrisy of the Spanish Friar, he stretched the veil of piety so thinly over him, that in every look, word, and motion you saw palpable, wicked slyness shine through it. Here he kept his vivacity demurely confined till the pretended duty of his function demanded it. And I do not doubt but the poet's knowledge of Leigh's genius helped him to many a pleasant stroke of nature, which without that knowledge never might have entered into his conception. Leigh was so eminent in this character that the late Earl of Dorset (who was equally an admirer and a judge of theatrical merit) had a whole-length of him, in the friar's habit, drawn by Kneller. The whole portrait is highly painted and extremely like him.

Underhill was a correct and natural comedian. His particular excellence was in characters that may be called still-life, I mean the stiff, the heavy, and the stupid. To these he gave the exactest and most expressive colours, and in some of them looked as if it were not in the power of human passions to alter a feature of him. A countenance of wood could not be more fixed than his when the blockhead of a character required it. *His face was full and long, from the crown to the end of his nose was the shorter half of it, so that the disproportion of his lower features, when soberly composed, with an unwandering eye hanging over them, threw him into the most lumpish moping mortal that ever made beholders merry—not but, at other times, he could be wakened into spirit equally ridiculous \**

The deep impressions of these excellent actors which I received in my youth, I am afraid, may have drawn me into the common foible of us old fellows, which is fondness, and perhaps a tedious impartiality, for the pleasures we have formerly tasted, and think are now fallen off, because we can no longer enjoy them. There were at this time several others in some degree of favour with the public, Powell, Verbruggen, Williams, etc. But as I cannot think their best improvements made them in any wise equal to those I have spoken of, I ought not to range them in the same class. Neither were Wilks or Dogget yet come to the stage, nor was Booth initiated till about six years after them, or Mrs. Oldfield

\* The engravings more than support the accuracy of this description

known till the year 1700. I must therefore reserve the four last for their proper period, and proceed to the actresses that were famous with Betterton at the latter end of the last century.

Mrs Barry was then in possession of almost all the chief parts in tragedy. I would observe that the short life of beauty is not long enough to form a complete actress. In men the delicacy of person is not so absolutely necessary, nor the decline of it so soon taken notice of. The fame Mrs. Barry arrived to is a particular proof of the difficulty there is in judging with certainty, from their first trials, whether young people will ever make any great figure on the theatre. There was, it seems, so little hope of Miss Barry at her first setting out, that she was, at the end of the first year, discharged the company, among others that were thought to be a useless expense to it. I take it for granted that the objection to Mrs Barry, at that time, must have been a defective ear, or some unskillful dissonance in her manner of pronouncing. But where there is a proper voice and person, with the addition of a good understanding, experience tells us that such defect is not always invincible, of which not only Mrs Barry, but the late Mrs Oldfield, are eminent instances. Mrs Barry, in characters of greatness, had a presence of elevated dignity, her mien and motion superb and gracefully majestic; her voice full, clear, and strong, so that no violence of passion could be too much for her, and when distress or tenderness possessed her she subsided into the most affecting melody and softness. In the art of exciting pity she had a power beyond all the actresses I have yet seen, or what your imagination can conceive. In scenes of anger, defiance, or resentment, while she was impetuous and terrible, she poured out the sentiment with an enchanting harmony. This great actress died of a fever, towards the latter end of Queen Anne. The year I have forgot, but perhaps you will recollect it by an expression which fell from her in blank verse in her last hours, when she was delirious, viz.

Ha, ha ! and so they make us lords by dozens.

Mrs. Betterton, though far advanced in years, was so great a mistress of nature that even Mrs. Barry, who acted the Lady

Macbeth after her, could not in that part, with all her superior strength and melody of voice, *throw out those quick and careless strokes of terror*, from the disorder of a guilty mind, which the other gave us with a facility in her manner that rendered them at once tremendous and delightful Time could not impair her skill, though he had brought her person to decay. She was to the last the admiration of all true judges of nature and lovers of Shakespeare, in whose plays she chiefly excelled, and without a rival When she quitted the stage several good actresses were the better for her instruction She was a woman of an unblemished and sober life, and had the honour to teach Queen Anne, when Princess, the part of Semandra in "Mithridates," which she acted at Court in King Charles's time After the death of Mr Betterton, her husband, that Princess, when Queen, ordered her a pension for life, but she lived not to receive more than the first half year of it Mrs Leigh, the wife of Leigh already mentioned, had a very droll way of dressing the pretty foibles of superannuated beauties

Here I cannot help observing, when there was but one theatre in London, at what unequal salaries, compared to those of later days, the hired actors were then held by the absolute authority of their frugal masters the patentees, for Mrs Butler had then but forty shillings a week, and could she have obtained an addition of ten shillings more (which was refused her) would never have left their service, but being offered her own conditions to go with Mr Ashbury to Dublin (who was then raising a company of actors for that theatre, where there had been none since the Revolution), her discontent here prevailed with her to accept of his offer, and he found his account in her value Were not those patentees most sagacious economists, that could lay hold on so notable an expedient to lessen their charge? How gladly, in my time of being a sharer, would we have given four times her income to an actress of her merit.

Mrs Mountfort, whose second marriage gave her the name of Verbruggen, was mistress of more variety of humour than I ever knew in any one woman actress This variety, too, was attended with an equal vivacity, which made her excellent in characters extremely different. As she was naturally a pleasant

mimic she had the skill to make that talent useful on the stage, a talent which may be surprising in a conversation, and yet be lost when brought to the theatre, which was the case of Estcourt already mentioned, but where the elocution is round, distinct, voluble, and various, as Mrs Mountfort's was, the mimic there is a great assistant to the actor Nothing, though ever so barren, if within the bounds of nature, could be fit in her hands She gave many heightening touches to characters but coldly written, and often made an author vain of his work that in itself had but little merit She was so fond of humour, in what low part soever to be found, that she would make no scruple of defacing her fair form to come heartily into it, for when she was eminent in several desirable characters of wit and humour in higher life, she would be in as much fancy when descending into the antiquated Abigail of Fletcher as when triumphing in all the airs and vain graces of a fine lady, a merit that few actresses care for In a play of D'Urfey's, now forgotten, called "The Western Lass," which part she acted, she transformed her whole being—body, shape, voice, language, look, and features —into almost another animal, with a strong Devonshire dialect, a broad laughing voice, a poking head, round shoulders, an unconceiving eye, and the most bedizening dowdy dress that ever covered the untanned limbs of a Joan Trot To have seen her here, you would have thought it impossible the same creature could ever have been recovered to what was as easy to her, the gay, the lively, and the desirable Nor was her humour limited to her sex, for, while her shape permitted, she was a more adroit pretty fellow than is usually seen upon the stage her easy air, action, mien, and gesture, quite changed from the quoif, to the cocked hat, and cavalier in fashion. People were so fond of seeing her a man, that when the part of Bays, in "The Rehearsal," had, for some time, lain dormant, she was desired to take it up, which I have seen her act with all the true coxcombly spirit and humour, that the sufficiency of the character required

But what found most employment for her whole various excellence at once, was the part of Melantha, in "Marriage à la Mode" Melantha is as finished an impertinent as ever fluttered in a drawing-room, and seems to contain the most complete system of female folly that could possibly be

crowded into the tortured form of a fine lady Her language, dross, motion, manners, soul, and body, are in a continual hurry to be something more than is necessary or commendable And though I doubt it will be a vain labour to offer you a just likeness of Mis Mountfort's action, yet the fantastic impression is still so strong in my memoiy, that I cannot help saying something, though fantastically, about it. The first ridiculous ans that break from her, aye, upon a gallant, never seen before, who deliv'ers her a letter from her father, recommending him to her good graces, as an honourable lover Here, now, one would think she might naturally show a little of her sex's decent reserve, though never so slightly covered. No, sir; not a tittle of it, modesty is the virtue of a poor-souled country gentlewoman, she is too much a court lady to be under so vulgar a confusion, she reads the letter, therefore, with a careless, dropping lip and an erected brow, humming it hastily over, as if she were impatient to outgo her father's commands, by making a complete conquest of him at once! and that the letter might not embarrass her attack—clack; she crumbles it at once into her palm, and pours upon him her whole artillery of ans, eyes, and motion , down goes her dainty diving body to the ground, as if she were sinking under the conscious load of her own attractions, then launches into a flood of fine language and compliment, still playing her chest forward in fifty falls and risings, like a swan upon waving water, and, to complete her impertinence, she is so rapidly fond of her own wit, that she will not give her lover leave to praise it silent, assenting bows, and vain endeavours to speak, are all the share of the conversation he is admitted to, which, at last, he is relieved from, by her engagement to half a score of visits, which she *swims* from him to make, with a promise to return in a twinkling

No praise could be too much for, nor words do justice to this justly celebrated and most exquisitely animated description. It seems like, and leaves the same impression as does the finer touches of Millamant in the comedy. Reading through all Cibber's sketches, one is inclined to agree with

his boast that no other stage could produce thirteen actors, of the same high excellence, flourishing at the same time

Something may be added here of Pinkethman and the Droll, Underhill. The former was notorious for what is vulgarly known as "gagging"—speaking always more than was set down for him. He was incurable in this, and presumed on his favour with the audience, and pretending to be sorry, and to apologise.

No wonder he was held up in these savage but sensible lines

Quit not your theme to win the gaping rout,  
Nor aim at Pinky's leer with "Blood! I'm out!"  
An arch dull rogue who lets the business cool  
To show how nicely he can play the fool.

It ends by saying that he deserves a "cat o' nine tails for his jokes"

When Pinkethman had his benefits at Greenwich his friend Underhill played for him "For Mr. William Pinkethman (*The Rover*). Ned Blunt by the famous true comedian, Cave Undehill, to oblige Mr. Pinkethman's true friends, with an epilogue by Mr. Pinkethman *riding on an ass.*" "I have often thought," says his friend Cibber, "that a good deal of the favour he met with was owing to this *seeming humble way* of waiving all pretences to merit but what the town would please to allow him. I have known him say apart to himself, yet loud enough to be heard, 'Odso! I believe I am a little wrong here; ' which once was so well received by the audience that they turned their reproof into applause." This is related by Mr. Davies "In the play of '*The Recruiting Officer*' Wilks was the Plume, and Pinkethman one of the recruits. The captain, when he enlisted him, asked his name instead of answering as he ought, Pink replied, 'Why, don't you know my name, Bob? I thought every fool had known that!'

Wilks, in a rage, whispered to him the name of the recruit—Thomas Appletree. The other retorted aloud, ‘Thomas Appletree? Thomas Devil! my name is Will Pinkethman,’ and, immediately addressing an inhabitant of the upper regions, he said, ‘Hark you, friend, don’t you know my name?’ ‘Yes, Master Pinky,’ said a respondent, ‘we know your name very well.’ The playhouse was now in an uproar—the audience, at first, enjoyed the petulant folly of Pinkethman and the distress of Wilks, but, in the progress of the joke, they grew tiresome, and Pinky met with his deserts—a very severe reprimand in a huss, but this mark of displeasure he changed into applause, by crying out, with a countenance as melancholy as he could make it, in a loud nasal twang, ‘Odso! I fear I am wrong.’”

Very pleasing, too, is Steele’s appeal for an old actor

My chief business here this evening was to speak to my friends on behalf of honest Cave Underhill, who has been a comic for three generations, my father admired him extremely when he was a boy. There is certainly nature excellently represented in his manner of action, in which he ever avoided that general fault in players of doing too much. It must be confessed he has not the merit of some ingenious persons now on the stage of adding to his authors; for the actors were so dull in the last age that many of them have gone out of the world without having ever spoke one word of their own in the theatre. Poor Cave is so mortified that he quibbles, and tells you he pretends only to act a part fit for a man who has one foot in the grave—viz a gravedigger. All admirers of true comedy, it is hoped, will have the gratitude to be present on the last day of his acting.

But there is a graphic portrait of this odd being which may be introduced here. Says Tony Aston:

Cave Underhill was more admired by the actors than the audience, there being then no rivals in his dry, heavy, downright

way in low comedy. He was six feet high, long and broad-faced, and something more corpulent than this author, his face very like the *Homo Sylvestris* or *Champana*, for his nose was flattish and short, and his upper lip very long and thick, with a wide mouth and a short chin, a churlish voice and awkward action, leaping often up with both legs at a time when he conceived anything waggish, and afterwards hugging himself at the thought. He was but little regarded till he chopped on the character of Solon in "The Morrigo State Match."

Another advertisement was issued in favour of the old "comic," who, when he appeared, was found to be too much worn and broken to get through his part.

Mr. Cave Underhill, the famous comedian in the reigns of King Charles the Second, King James the Second, King William the Third, Queen Mary, and her present Majesty Queen Anne, but now not able to perform so often as heretofore in the playhouse, and having had losses to the value of near 2500*l.*, is to have the tragedy of "Hamlet" acted for his benefit on June 3rd next, in which he is to perform his original part, the Gravedigger. Tickets may be had at the Mitre Tavern, Fleet Street.

But at every stage we find these substantial signs of buffooning licence, by which the player sought to draw the attention of the town, and which, it must be at once insisted on, made the control of the licence essential, though too often ineffectual. It is well known that many of the players kept booths at the fairs, which could not have been an orderly or legitimate school, and their appeals to the public, for patronage at their benefits, are in the same spirit. Thus Spiller would announce his night, "for the benefit of myself and creditors." In these straits and difficulties the improvident fellow seemed to take a pride. He seems to have been a friend and companion of Hogarth's, who aided him in his own way on these occasions, and engraved a grotesque ticket for his benefit. The actor is shown

selling tickets for his benefit, with bailiffs waiting to arrest him, while creditors with bills are grouped round. "I have seen," says Mr Ireland, "a well-engraved ticket for his benefit, which had for its supports himself and his wife, both represented in a state of intoxication" During the latter part of his life he was in great poverty, and he shared an apartment with Walker. His end was in keeping. While playing as clown, on the night of January 31st, 1729, he was seized with apoplexy on the stage, and died a week after. He was buried at the expense of Rich. The Spiller's Head, in Clare Market, was named in his honour.

On March 31st we find for the benefit of Spiller, "a collection of farces after the English manner, viz. 'Walking Statue,' 'Hob, or, The Country Wake,' and 'Cobbler of Preston,' and whereas I, James Spiller, of Gloucestershire, having received an invitation from Hildebrand Bullock, of Liquorpond Street, London, to exercise the usual weapons of the noble science of defence, will not fail to meet this bold invader, desiring a full stage, blunt weapons, and from him much favour"

Estcourt is assumed to have belonged to the respectable class of actors, yet, as in the case of so many, drunkenness and debauchery seem to have hastened his death. To the end of his life he combined—as some inferior players and pantomimists of our time have done—the keeping of a tavern with his other profession, offering excellent wines to his customers. When he opened this public-house, "The Spectator" good-naturedly gave him "bold advertisement." "This is to give notice that Mr. Estcourt has chosen and laid in the Bumper Tavern, James Street, Covent Garden, which was opened this day with the best accommodation, neat, natural wines, fresh and in perfection, being bought of Brooke and Hellier, by whom the said tavern will be from time to time supplied with the best growths

that shall be imported, to be sold by wholesale as well as retail, with the utmost fidelity by his old servant, Trusty Antony [Tony Aston], who has so often adorned both the theatres in England and Ireland; and as he is a person altogether unknowing in the wine trade, it cannot but be doubted but that he will deliver the wine in the same natural purity that he receives it from the said merchants." This step, we are informed, "enlarged his acquaintance and shortened his days: he that sells wines and prepares dinners is at the call of every company that visits his house" He died shortly after, on August 25th, and was buried near Jo Haines, in St Paul's Churchyard—truly a worthy pair!

Nor must we pass by a better-known name. The year 1736 was remarkable for the death, at the age of fifty-four, of the Droll, Joe Miller, whose name is imperishably associated with an old jest-book, or collection of "common forms" of jests.

Writes my friend Mr. Sala. "There is extant an extremely rare print, designed and engraved by William Hogarth as a ticket for his friend Joe Miller's benefit at Drury Lane Theatre, on the 25th of April, 1717. The actor is delineated in the character of Sir Joseph Whittoll in Congreve's comedy of 'The Old Bachelor,' and the student of the engraving will scarcely fail to notice the curious resemblance of the features and general expression to those of an admirable low comedian of the past generation—Liston. The last benefit-night of 'Joe' Miller was in April, 1736, and in the August of the same year he died. On a tombstone erected to his memory was inscribed an epitaph, setting forth that 'Honest Jo Miller' was 'a tender husband, a sincere friend, and a facetious companion.' His 'humour, wit, and honesty' are thrice alluded to: Among the company who frequented The Black Jack was a playwright of small

talents and smaller means named Mottley. The popular productions of the day included compilations of stale jests and stories newly vamped up with a few additions and variations; and it was a common trick to place on the title of one of these cheap books the name of some person of recent celebrity in order to give it an appearance of novelty. Thus, in the sixteenth century, there had been 'Scogan's Jests' and 'Skelton's,' with others attributed to 'Tarleton,' and especially to Peele. In the century following, a jest-book was christened after the well-known Pinkethman, the theatrical booth-manager. His name was thought sufficiently popular to grace the title of a volume of 'Facetiæ,' which was published in 1739 as 'Joe Miller's Jests; or, The Wit's Vade Mecum,' the compiler, Mottley, assuming the *nom de plume* of 'Elijah Jenkins, Esq.,' and stating in his preface that the contents had been carefully collected in the company and many of them transcribed from the mouth of the facetious gentleman whose name they bear. The reason for the amazing popularity which 'Joe Miller's Jests' attained seems to have been that the collection was not a mere 'pasticcio' under a different name of what had been published scores of times before, but that it was a selection from the best jokes current about town at the period. Some of the drolleries were apparently new, and the work was in consequence heartily welcomed."

## CHAPTER IX.

### REVOLT FROM COLLIER.

MR. COLLIER being now installed—and it is curious what a line of inconsistent professions have been always associated with the direction of the stage, including officers of the army, doctors, etc.—set himself to the task of making money out of his privilege.

In 1709, we find in the situation of “Master of Drury Lane” a well-known character of his day, Mr. Aaron Hill, an author, critic, amateur, and play-writer, who had been also in office at the Haymarket. “In person,” we are told, “he was tall and genteel, in advanced life his figure, air, and manner were gracefully venerable, with a warm and benevolent mind, he had the delicate address and polite manners of the complete gentleman.” He wrote plays and poems which were not very successful, and directed an opera as well as the theatre. Obtaining a fortune by his second wife, he was enabled to gratify his taste to the full in cultivating the acquaintance of the players, and became one of the earliest members of the guild of translators and adapters from the French. With these performances he was ever importuning managers, in particular with one called “The Death of Cæsar,” which no inducement could get them to accept. For one of his pieces he took a

room and had it performed by friends. He then thought of reforming the stage altogether by founding a proper academy for teaching the actors, and established a paper called "The Prompter," in which he assailed them, particularly Cibber and Quin. The first disdained to take any notice, but the choleric Quin, happening to meet him outside a court of law, a scuffle took place, in which blows were exchanged. This fussy personage, who, however, was respected and liked for his good-nature and charity, died in 1750.

Mr Collier then having established his reign by violence was now to find this weapon turned against him. The turbulence, lawlessness, and insolence knew no bounds. Mr. Aaron Hill, his manager, had found the "seven managers," or players who worked with him, utterly impracticable, and, armed with the authority of the patent, summarily deposed them. This was at the beginning of June, 1710. The strange proceedings that followed are graphically detailed in an unpublished letter of the manager to his principal, Collier, who had left town.\* "Before Collier left town," writes Hill, "I had this power from the managers, a great surprise to them and resented by all." Bickerstaff and Keene, it seems, were the players "most publicly disgusted, though the body of the actors were pleased beyond expression." In this state of affairs he appointed one Park his "manager of rehearsals," but who, after a day or two's experience of his company, threw up his office. The post was then offered to Booth, who, "with an insolence peculiar to his nature," refused it unless the seven managers were restored that very night. It was plain now that a conspiracy was being formed, yet Mr Hill rather inopportune chose this season for a visit down to

\* This letter, and many other curious documents connected with this era of Drury Lane, I owe to the kindness of Mr A Harvey, of St. James's Street, whose knowledge and taste as a collector are well known.

Essex. There, he says, the news suddenly reached him "that they were all in an uproar" He had appointed his brother stage-manager, who, for some failure of duty, had "forfeited them" On which they threw up all their parts, broke out into insubordination, and there were actually fears that they would seize on the house and carry off "the cloaths" Mr Hill hurried up to town, and found all true, with this addition—that Mr. Bickerstaff had "*beaten a poor fellow blind for reproofing him for speaking scurrilously of me,*" and had actually pushed the manager off the stage For this offence Mr. Hill suspended Bickerstaff and Keene, and when he remonstrated with the former and begged of him not to be "*misled by villains,*" "*he went into defiant revolt, forced the painter to put his name in the bills, and told the manager that he did not value him nor any man alive, but himself was his own master.*" "*Leigh, with an impudence unheard of, exceeded all things. He told me he would not only be a manager, when I was none, but would go down and act with Pinkethman in spite of the Lord Chamberlain or me.* Booth, with a thousand rascally invectives, told me publicly that he and they would."

This foreboded an alarming state of things, and it showed to what lengths of insolence the players could proceed Meanwhile Hill was receiving anonymous letters of warning that violence was intended, and took measures to protect his theatre. He told Stockdale, his deputy, not to open the doors for the performance until a "guard of constables should arrive to keep the boxes" and protect him from being assaulted in the performance of his duty. But when he went down that night he found a perfect riot going on. Booth, heading a mob, had burst in the doors, and rushed up the passages behind the scenes. Then followed a scandalous scene With drawn swords the infuriated players rushed into the manager's office

He half drew his, and with difficulty forced his way out into the passages "Powell then shortened his sword to stab me in the back, but I was saved by a gentleman Leigh struck my brother a dangerous blow on the head with a stick All this was in the open, in the presence of a number of men and women who had come to see the play" The hunted director rushed to the Lord Chamberlain, but unfortunately could not find him. Returning to the theatre, he found all the regular doorkeepers replaced by men appointed by the actors, and he himself was refused admission.

Mr Rich was then seen to pass by, who was greeted with loud "hurrahs," his hands kissed rapturously, while Leigh saluted him "God bless you, master! See, we are at work for you" The "cloaths" of the theatre were not yet gone, but were to be sent off the following day, and Rich was to be invited to take possession Hill declared that the ringleaders, Powell and Leigh, were to be taken into custody and silenced, which no doubt they were. All these extraordinary proceedings, which the manager described as "burglary, felony, and violent possession," threw a strange light on the position of the actor at this time, and arose out of his situation under the patent. For, if he was controlled by the Court, he was at the same time a favoured monopolist, and as there were few fit to take his place, he could, as it were, "strike," and make his terms. The whole was no doubt instigated by Rich, who seems to have been an intriguer of the first quality.

Connected with this *émeute* is the appearance of old Downes, the prompter, who writes to the editor of "The Tatler" a desponding account of the state of the theatre and this lawyer-manager Mr Steele, just as the editor of a society paper of to-day would do, gives his aid to a theatrical friend by a kind of artful paragraph "I had hardly entered Will's Coffee-house when I was accosted by Mr. Thomas Dogget, who

desired my favour in relation to the play that was to be acted for his benefit on Thursday Dogget thanked me for my visit to him in the winter, and after his comic manner spoke his request with so arch a leer that I promised the droll I would speak to all my acquaintance to be at his play" So might one of our own facetious mimics behave at his club. "Dogget, I guessed, would not let me go without delivering me a letter from poor old Downes," which was dated only three weeks after the riot behind the scenes.

July 1, 1710

Honoured Sir,—Finding by divers of your late papers that you are a friend to the profession of which I was many years an unworthy member, I the rather make bold to crave your advice touching a proposal that has been lately made me of coming again into business and the sub-administration of stage affairs. I have from my youth been bred up behind the curtain, and been a prompter from the time of the Restoration. I have seen many changes, as well of scenes as of actors, and have known men within my remembrance arrive to the highest dignities of the theatre, who made their entrance in the quality of mutes, joint-stools, flower-pots, and tapestry hangings. It cannot be unknown to the nobility and gentry that a gentleman of the Inns of Court, and a deep intriguer, had some time since worked himself into the sole management and direction of the theatre. Nor is it less notorious that his restless ambition and subtle machinations did manifestly tend to the extirpation of the good old British actors, and the introduction of foreign pretenders—such as harlequins, French dancers, and Roman singers—which, though they impoverished the proprietors and imposed on the audience, were for some time tolerated, by reason of his dexterous insinuations, which prevailed upon a few deluded women, especially the vizard masks, to believe that the stage was in danger. But his schemes were soon exposed, and the great ones that supported him withdrawing their favour, he made his exit, and remained for a season in obscurity. During this retreat the Machiavelian was not idle, but secretly fomented divisions and wrought over to his side some of the inferior actors, reserving

a trap-door to himself, to which only he had a key. This entrance secured, this cunning person, to complete his company, bethought himself of calling in the most eminent strollers from all parts of the kingdom I have seen them all ranged together behind the scenes, but they are many of them persons that never trod the stage before, and so very awkward and ungainly, that it is impossible to believe the audience will bear them He was looking over his catalogue of plays, and indeed picked up a good tolerable set of grave faces for counsellors to appear in the famous scene of "Venice Preserved," when the danger is over, but they being but mere outsides, and the actors having a great mind to play "The Tempest," there is not a man of them, when he is to perform anything above dumb show, is capable of acting with a good grace so much as the part of Trinculo However, the master persists in his design, and is fitting up the old "Storm," but I am afraid he will not be able to procure able sailors or experienced officers for love or money.

Besides all this, when he comes to cast the parts, there is so great a confusion amongst them for want of proper actors, that for my part I am wholly disengaged. The play with which they design to open is "The Duke and no Duke," and they are so put to it that the master himself is to play the Conjuror, and they have no one for the General but honest George Powel

Now, sir, they being so much at a loss for the *dramatis personae*, viz the persons to enact, and the whole frame of the house being designed to be altered, I desire your opinion whether you think it advisable for me to undertake to prompt them? For though I can clash swords when they represent a battle, and have yet lungs enough left to huzza their victories, I question, if I should prompt them right, whether they would act accordingly.

I am, your Honour's most humble Servant,  
JOHN DOWNES.

The changes indeed made by Collier were of the most capricious and distressing character; but no change was

destined to bring him success. As we have seen, when he had secured the opera, he showed eagerness to part with it, and obtained a tenant in Mr. Aaron Hill, who agreed to give him 600*l.* a year. When he found that Hill was making the speculation pay he took it from him, and when he himself found that he could do nothing with it, he forced it on Swiny, who was to be ruined by it.

Collier, finding his office thus disagreeable, and being in the position of a favoured monopolist, was anxious to make all the profit he could without inconvenience; so, perfectly willing to lay down his office, he proposed to enter into an arrangement with three such competent men as Cibber, Booth, and Dogget, trained actors, well known and respected by the public. He, however, drove a hard bargain with them, requiring 700*l.* a year. "These large and ample conditions, considering in what hands we were, we resolved to swallow without wry faces, rather choosing to run any hazard than contend with a formidable power, against which we had no remedy, but so it happened, that fortune took better care of our interest than we ourselves had like to have done, for had Collier accepted of our first offer, of an equal share with us, he had got 300*l.* a year more by complying with it than by the sum he imposed upon us, our shares being never less than 1000*l.* annually to each of us till the end of the Queen's reign, in 1714." Accordingly, in November, 1710, they sent in their application, which is in the handwriting of Wilks, but signed by the others. It runs .

We are willing to accept of Her Majesty's licence, and to act on such days as his Grace the Lord Chamberlain shall appoint We hope our ready submission will entitle us to his Grace's favour, in case we are not able to support the company under the loss of Saturday.—(Signed) Wilks, Dogget, Cibber November 10, 1710.

This referred to the best day of the week, which they were obliged to resign to the opera. Thus all these troubles were composed and order restored, but the victory remained with the players

The year 1709 witnessed the total razing to the ground of the handsome Dorset Gardens Theatre, and its conversion into a timber-yard. It was probably found too much out of the way, or perhaps the City opposition was too strong. For only six years before, when it was proposed to refit it, the grand jury took alarm, and petitioned for "the having some effectual course taken, if possible, to prevent the youth of this city from resorting to the playhouses, which we rather mention because the playhouse bills are again posted up throughout the city, in contempt of a former presentment and a positive order of the Lord Mayor and Court of Aldermen to the contrary, dated June, 1700, as also because we are informed that a playhouse within the liberties of this city, which has been of late disused and neglected, is at this time refitting in order to be used as formerly. We do not presume to prescribe to this honourable court, but we cannot question but that, if they shall think fit humbly to address Her Majesty in this case, she will be graciously pleased to prevent it"

It is extraordinary to find this hostility enduring to so late a period, but to this hour the theatre scarcely flourishes within the precincts



**Period the Third.**

FROM THE CIBBER-WILKS MANAGEMENT TO THAT OF  
GARRICK, 1710-1747.



## CHAPTER I.

### THE NEW MANAGEMENT—COLLEY CIBBER.

We now enter on an era of prosperity and decorum for old Drury Lane Theatre. The new managers were Cibber, Dogget, and Wilks, with Collier, who was merely a sleeping partner. They were, however, only acting under a licence “at pleasure,” the patent having travelled away from the theatre, and being in the possession of Rich, who was now thinking of rebuilding Lincoln’s Inn Fields. The engaged company in 1711 consisted of Wilks, Booth, Cibber, Dogget, Johnson, Mills, Pinkethman, Bullock, sen., Pack, Bullock, jun., Norris, Estcourt, Bowen, Powell, Elrington, Keene, Burkhead, Leigh, Ryan, Cross, Spiller, Thurmond, Griffith, Corny, Carnaby, Newman, Bickerstaff, Mrs Oldfield, Mrs. Wilhs, Mrs Powell, Mrs Porter, Mrs Bicknell, Mis. Saunders, Mrs. Rogers, Mrs Santlow, Miss Willis, Miss Shirbun, Miss Cox, Miss Smith, Miss Baker, and Miss Mills.

To read the graphic, sagacious, and spirited narrative of Cibber, in which he himself figures so largely, one would set him down as a moderate, rather patient observer, looking on at the follies, mistakes, and passions of others, but himself scarcely concerned, or ready to make sacrifice, and indeed often sacrificed. Yet it is certain that scarcely any of his contemporaries had a good word for him, and in his old age he seems to have been a cantankerous old man. The contrast between

his own story and that of others is truly amusing. As in the case of most prominent figures connected with the stage, there is the element of romance, and it is curious that one of foreign extraction, such as Vanbrugh was, should have added so much to the glories of English comedy. "As envy," says the worthy Chetwood, "seldom attacks any other object but conspicuous merit, this gentleman was generally attacked by the tribe of scribblers, his contemporary authors, that like village curs bark when their fellows do, which he regarded not, and if he ever seemed to rouse, it was like the lion in 'Don Quixote.' And as to his person, he is straight and well made, of an open countenance, even free from the conspicuous marks of old age, meet, or follow him, and no person would imagine he ever bore the burden of above two-thirds of his years. He is head of a numerous family. This great actor," he adds, "as well as author, was once in this kingdom (Ireland), many years ago, which I gathered from his saying he landed in the night, and when he asked what place they were in, was answered, 'Ringsend.' 'Oh, then I am sure we are right,' meaning the answer as a native blunder. But to rescue that place from the aspersion, I am credibly informed it was the original dwelling of a person whose name was Ring, and from him took its denomination."

No life illustrates more curiously the history of the stage than that of Colley Cibber, and no figure stands out more conspicuously in that sort of turbulence and war which the actor of his era had to wage. His strange career shows us that the actor was as marked a figure off the stage as upon it.

Cibber, in the course of his retrospect, tells us pleasantly the story of his rise. He was a pure adventurer, but one of ability. He was born in that theatrical street, Southampton Street, in 1671, and everyone who passes near London can note on the Monument the wonderful flamboyant, extravagant,

yet spirited piece of sculpture, the work of his father. As a boy he became dependent on the Earl of Devonshire, a patron of his father's, but an incurable taste for the stage converted him into a dangler about the scenes, where he was allowed to take small parts, but for some time without salary. He tells pleasantly himself of his snubs, his insufficiency of voice, and his uninformed meagre person, though then not ill-made, with a dismal pale complexion. His first step to success as a hired actor was thus related by Cross, the prompter, to Mr. Davies—“By good fortune he obtained the honour of carrying a message on the stage, in some play, to Betterton. Whatever was the cause, Master Colley was so terrified that the scene was disconcerted by him. Betterton asked, in some anger, who the young fellow was that committed the blunder. Downes replied, ‘Master Colley’ ‘Master Colley!’ then forfeit him.’ ‘Why, sir,’ said the prompter, ‘he has no salary’ ‘No!’ said the old man, ‘why then, put him down ten shillings a week and forfeit him five’”

A more favourable opportunity was found in his taking a part in a play of Congreve's, at short notice; the actors being so pleased as to recommend him for an increase of salary. He now enjoyed twenty shillings a week, and on this, at twenty-two years old, he married. When contending with the rival theatre, he was suddenly thrust into the play of “The Old Bachelor.” He says “The part was put into my hands between eleven and twelve that morning, which I durst not refuse, because others were as much straitened in time for study as myself.” He made it a success by mimicking—too often the most fatal gift for a beginner—Dogget. From that time he continued to prosper, and became as admirable an actor as he was author.

His conflict with Pope, himself a dramatist, arose “after several flirts,” skirmishes from some ridicule thrown upon a

piece in which the poet had a share. In this drama, "Three Hours after Marriage," produced in 1717, two lovers were shown getting access to a virtuoso's, disguised, one as a mummy the other as a crocodile. These farcical devices Cibber laughed at in his character of Bayes, to the indignation of the poet, who was in the theatre. "In the swelling of his heart," says Cibber, "after the play was over, he came behind the scene, with his lips pale and trembling, to call me to account for the insult, and fell on me with foul language." It is also stated that a more serious encounter took place behind the scenes between Cibber and Gay \*

Cibber took the matter in a good-humoured way, and excused himself to the angry poet by saying that it was the privilege of his character, and that it was sanctioned by the approbation of the public. Later on, when "The Nonjuror" was brought out, Pope had his revenge, publishing an artful attack, in which he tried to prove that it was a veiled attack upon Government and a vindication of the Jacobites. Nothing, indeed, shows the venomous nature of the "wasp of Twickenham" more than his versified attacks on his enemy, whose "Cibberian forehead" he railed at

How with less reading than makes felons 'scape,  
Less human genius than God gives an ape,  
Small thanks to France, and none to Rome or Greece,  
A patch'd, vamp'd, future, old, reviv'd new piece,  
'Twixt Plautus, Fletcher, Congreve, and Corneille,  
Can make a Cibber—

\* It seems, from a letter of Gay's to Pope, that the poet advised leaving out "the crocodile" "As to your apprehension," he adds, "that this may do us future injury, do not think of it Your name is double I will, if any storm there be, take it all to myself" This piece is a remarkable illustration of the mode of adapting and borrowing then in vogue The characters were all personal, and drawn from Dennis, Dr Woodward, and Lady Winchelsea. The incidents were taken from "La Cour Imaginaire," "The Changeling," and an Italian farce called "The Mummies of Egypt"

This scurrility, it must be said, the actor met with an assumed complacency and indifference that must have been galling.

The great opportunities for success and self-praise offered by the stage, it is to be feared, engender more of malice, hatred, and ill-will than is found in other professions. There is an episode, in which Pope figured, which gathers these vices into a small compass in an incredible way. Dennis, the savage critic, grown old and reduced to poverty, was to have a benefit, and bethought him that if he could get his old enemy's (Pope's) patronage for the performance, it would bring money and company. What follows Voltaire might have described. The old critic declared that he knew how to get him to consent. He knew pretty well the vanity of the little gentleman, and would, therefore, solicit him to write a prologue, and that he was sure, notwithstanding their mutual enmity, *the reputation of appearing charitable* would readily induce him to undertake it. He was not deceived. Pope consented, and the play, thus strengthened, produced a good house, while the virtue of forgiveness of enemies was loudly chanted to Pope's honour. Both the world, however, and Dennis were deceived, for the prologue was couched in such terms that every line contained some fine ironical stroke of satire against the poor devil he professed to serve \*

In a testimonial which the much-abused Rich had once received from one of his most prominent actors, is a great compliment. Powell thus inscribes a play to him “ You are

\* In 1709, the malignant critic ventured to produce on the stage a play called “Appius and Virginia,” which, as was to be expected, met with complete damnation—a fact scarcely worth recording, save that it is associated with a quotation often made but little understood, viz “That’s my thunder!” On the success of his piece he had reckoned greatly, as he had devised a new species of thunder, which was to produce an effect. The managers having been at much expense getting this “property” ready, were determined to keep it for general use. A few nights later it was accordingly introduced into “Macbeth,” and Dennis, who was present, jumped up hastily and called out, “There! that’s my thunder” There is here a stroke of comedy

so much the gentleman in your candour and goodness, and the conduct of your whole administration among us, that nothing but the highest ingratitude can play the infidel with you It is true you have unhappily met with too many barbarous returns from murmurers and mutineers—against such poor apostacy here enter my public protestation and abhorrence” He was then acting as a sort of sub-manager to Rich, and it is characteristic to find that he “played the infidel to him” with the rest, and deserted. Powell was one of the most conspicuous actors, and hangs in Cibber’s gallery of portraits, who, dwelling on his defects, points out how he would neglect rehearsals, and how in his private life he indulged in gambling and other vices And in a little tract in my possession, by Gay, is another attack on Cibber’s play, in which he proves that it was “adapted” from Molière.

Returning to Mr Cibber, or Cyber, we learn from Tom Davies, who had picked up a good deal about him from old actors, that “in his youth he was a man of great levity, and the constant companion of our young noblemen and men of fashion in their hours of dissipation. Cibber diverted them with his sallies of humour and odd vivacities He had the good fortune, in advanced life, to solace the cares of a great statesman in his relaxations from business Mr Pelham loved a *tête-à-tête* with Colley Cibber But Colley, we are told, had the honour to be a member of the great club at White’s; and so I suppose might any man, not quite unknown, who wore good clothes and paid his money when he lost it But on what terms did Cibber live with this society? Why, he feasted most sumptuously, as I have heard his friend Victor say with an air of triumphant exultation, with Mr. Arthur and his wife, and gave eighteen-pence for his dinner After he had dined, when the club-room door was opened, and the Laureate was introduced, he was saluted with the loud and joyous acclamation of ‘O King

Coll! Come in, King Coll! Welcome, welcome, King Colley!" And this kind of gratulation, Mr Victor thought, was very gracious and very honourable. I have heard, from better authority than Dennis, that he was a man of great good-nature and humanity It is sufficient to say that to the very dregs of old age he was addicted to pleasure"

Once a young gentleman called at his door to ask him to look at his piece, and gave into his hands a roll of paper as he stood on the threshold, the door being half opened. Cibber turned over the first leaf—it is Davies again tells the story—and reading only two lines, returned it with the words, "Sir, it will not do." The mortified author left Cibber went delighted to Button's to tell the story, but was rebuked sternly by his friend Colonel Brett He had a passion, we are told, for doing what was unsuitable to him, as, for instance, acting tragic parts, but his "arrangement" of Shakespeare's "Richard the Third" is admitted to be masterly as a specimen of stagecraft

It may be doubted if these days of word-painting could supply anything so good as Tony Aston's sketch, or photograph, of Colley Cibber He "laboured under an ill figure, being clumsily made, having a great head, a short thick neck, stooped in the shoulders, and had fat short arms, which he rarely lifted higher than his stomach His left hand frequently lodged in his breast, between his coat and waistcoat, while with his right he prepared his speech. His actions were few, but just. He had little eyes and a broad face, a little pock-fretted, a corpulent body and thick legs, with large feet. He was better to meet than to follow for his aspect was serious, venerable, and majestic in his latter time a little paralytic. His voice was low and grumbling yet he could tune it by an artful climax, which enforced universal attention, even from the fops and orange-girls."

The portrait of the new manager that now hangs in the Garrick Club gives an admirable idea of his farcical grace as Lord Foppington, though his face is large, the features are small, and there is a feminine quickness “It should be borne in mind, in perusing this comedy, that that character is a species of foppery that is now entirely lost, the beaux, sixty years ago, were of a quite different cast from the modern stamp, they had more of the stateliness of the peacock in their mien than the pert air of the lapwing”

In the year 1738 he determined to reappear on the boards. In comedy he did fairly, but in “Richard” he gave way. His usual strength and spirit failed him most unhappily. “I went behind the scenes in the third act, and asking him how he fared, he whispered me in the ear, ‘*That he would give fifty guineas to be then sitting in his easy-chair by his own fireside.*’ This secret, which the difficulties of that night let him into, gave him a quietus.” Six years later, strange to say, he was seized with a desire to appear once more, and an old play, “Papal Tyranny,” an alteration of “King John,” was brought out, he himself taking the part of the cardinal. He found himself in the genuine piece at Drury Lane, with Garrick and another player in the two chief characters. He reaped a profit of some 400*l*, which he laid out in a profitable annuity with the late Lord Mountford, and retired positively for the last time.\* He continued to use his pen, writing “On the Character of Cicero,” etc. In 1743, the “wasp of Twickenham” bringing out a new edition of the “Dunciad,” the old man found that Theobald had been removed from the throne of “King Log,” and he himself substituted, which he took in good humour, though he replied in “a high-mettled, spirited epistle.” Such was Cibber, the most

\* It is strange also to find that such veterans as Charles Mathews and Phelps were making large sums when death surprised them

experienced member of the management. Anticipating by many years, we may conclude his life, the latter part of which was taken up in “snarling” at the success of Garrick.

Says Mr. Victor, “he lived till the 12th of December, 1757, when his man-servant (whom he had talked to by his bedside at six in the morning, in seeming good health) found him dead at nine, lying on his pillow just as he left him. His fortune (which was nothing considerable, as the chief part of his income was his laureateship and annuities) he bequeathed to his grand-daughters, and thus departed this life, without a pang, at the age of eighty-six.”

## CHAPTER II.

### WILKS AND DOGGET.

A PLEASANT criticism of Steele's shall introduce these agreeable performers

The first of the present stage (he says) are Wilks and Cibber, perfect actors in their different kinds Wilks has a singular talent in representing the graces of nature, Cibber the deformity in the affectation of them Were I a writer of plays, I should never employ either of them in parts which had not their bent this way *This is seen in the inimitable strain and run of good-humour* which is kept up in the character of Wildair, and in the nice and delicate abuse of understanding in that of Sir Novelty. Cibber, in another light, hits exquisitely *the flat civility* of an affected gentleman-usher, and Wilks the easy frankness of a gentleman.

To beseech gracefully, to approach respectfully, to pity, to mourn, to love, are the places wherein Wilks may be made to shine with the utmost beauty. To rally pleasantly, to scorn artfully, to flatter, to ridicule, and to neglect, are what Cibber would perform with no less excellence.

Downes, having opportunities for judging, also pleasantly touches off these players They seem men of flesh and blood, and occupy a place in the social life of the day First for Mr. Wilks, set off by sketches of Booth and his fellow-performers.

Mr Wilks. Proper and comely in person, of graceful poit, mien, and air , void of affectation , his elevations and cadences just congruous to elocution, especially in genteel comedy not inferior to tragedy The emission of his words free, easy, and natural , attracting attentive silence in his audience (I mean the judicious), except where there are unnatural iants —Mr Cyber. A gentleman of his time has arrived at an exceeding perfection in hitting just the humour of a starched brace or fop as the Lord Foppington, Sir Fopling, and Sir Courtly ; equalling in the last the late eminent Mr Mountfort, not much inferior in tragedy, had nature given him lungs strenuous to his finished judgment —Mr Estcourt (*Hister natus*). He has the honour (nature enduing him with a free, easy, unaffected mode of elocution) in comedy always to *laetificate* his audience, especially quality (witness Serjeant Kyte) He is not excellent only in that, but a superlative mimic —Mr. Booth A gentleman of liberal education, of form Venust, and of mellifluent pronunciation, having proper gesticulations, which are graceful attendants of true elocution , of his time a most complete tragedian —Mr Johnson. He is skilful in the art of painting, which is a great adjument, very promovent to the art of true elocution, which is always required in him that bears the name of an actor He has the happiness to gain applause from Court and City witness, Morose and several others He is a true copy of Mr Underhill, whom Sir William Davenant judged forty years ago in Lincoln's Inn Fields the truest comedian in his company —Mr Dogget On the stage, he is very aspectabund, wearing a farce in his face, his thoughts deliberately framing his utterance congruous to his looks. He is the only comic original now extant witness, Ben, Solon, Nikin, the Jew of Venice

Such is the second of the managers, Wilks, one of the pleasing and interesting characters of the stage Mr. Chetwood, who knew him well, gives this account of him

Our great comedian was born at Rathfarnham, near Dublin, in the year 1670. His father gave him a genteel education. He wrote an excellent fine masterly hand with such celerity that was

surprising. His genius recommended him to Secretary Southwell, who confirmed him one of his clerks when eighteen years of age. His first inclination to the theatre proceeded from the praises of Mr Richards, then an actor on the Dublin stage. Mr Richards lodged near Mr. Wilks, and being intimate with each other, he used to hold the book of the play, to hear if Richards was perfect in the part he was then studying. Mr Wilks used to read the introductory speeches, with such proper emphasis, cadence, and all the various passions, that the encomiums given by Mr. Richards began to fire his mind for the drama.

The first part he played on the theatre was Othello, with the utmost applause, and, as he told me, pleased all but himself. He went on with great success for two years, when his friend Mr Richards advised him to try his fortune in England, and gave him letters of recommendation to Mr. Betterton, who received him very kindly, and entered him at fifteen shillings a week. His first appearance on the English stage was in the part of the young prince in "The Maid's Tragedy," a very insignificant character, requiring little more than an amiable figure. Mr Betterton performed Melantius; but when that veteran actor came to address him on the battlements, to excuse himself for the death of the king in the play, Mr Wilks affirmed to me that the dignity of Mr Betterton struck him with such an awe that he had much to do to utter the little he had to say. Mr Betterton, observing his confusion, said to him "Young man, this fear does not ill become you, a horse that sets out at the strength of his speed will soon be jaded."

However, Mr Wilks soon shook off his apprehensions, and began to rise in the esteem of the audience, and better parts gained him a better salary. He often assisted Mr. Harris (an eminent dancing-master, at that time) in teaching his scholars, and by his genteel address gained the affection of a young lady, daughter to Ferdinand Knapton, Esq., Steward of the New Forest, in Hampshire, and by the consent of the father were joined in wedlock. By this gentlewoman he had one son and daughter, the son died in his youth. The daughter was married to Captain Price, to whom he made up a fortune of a thousand pounds. Mr. Wilks's finances did

not well answer the state of an increasing family, pressed for an addition to his salary, which every person but the manager thought he deserved, but his request was not complied with Mr. Ashbury, in Ireland, hearing of his discontent, came over on purpose to engage him. He agreed with Mr Wilks for sixty pounds a year and a clear benefit, which in those times was much more than any other actor ever had. When he went to take his leave of Mr. Betterton, the manager was with him. That great actor expressed some concern at his leaving the company "I fancy," said Mr Betterton, "that gentleman" (pointing to the manager), "if he has not too much obstinacy to own it, will be the first that repents your parting, for, if I foresee aright, you will be greatly wanted here." Mr Wilks told me this speech gave him infinite pleasure, and made him resolve to search into himself to find out what Mr Betterton's known judgment seemed to promise he might find.

At the death of Mountfort Mr Wilks was immediately sent to with proposals of four pounds a week, which was a salary equal to Mr Betterton. This was too advantageous an offer to be refused, therefore he prepared for his journey privately. Mr Ashbury was so unwilling to part with him, that he procured an order from the Duke of Oimond (then Lord Lieutenant) to prevent his going, but a particular friend giving him timely notice, he went secretly to Hoath, where a boat waited to convey him on board, and he landed safe in England.

There was an actress for whom he conceived so ardent an attachment that he fell ill, until she promised to favour his addresses. But such violent attachments have too often but violent endings. The lover soon cooled, but they had still to act in tender characters, Jaffier and Belvidera in "Venice Preserved," when the lady took the opportunity of leaving on his face visible marks of her jealous resentment. This, however painful to him, was sport to the audience. The play was frequented much, and as a reward for his great merit he was joined in the patent granted by Queen Anne in the year 1709. He was also manager of the whole, and I shall not take from the merit of others, when I say from his sole directions the stage gained new life, and reward followed the industry.

For a continued course of the three managers for more than twenty years, the stage was in full perfection, their green-rooms were free from indecencies of every kind, and might justly be compared to the most elegant drawing-rooms of the prime quality, no fops or coxcombs ever showed their monkey tricks there, but if they chanced to thrust in, were awed into respect, even persons of the first rank and taste of both sexes would often mix with the performers without any stain to their honour or understanding, and, indeed, Mr Wilks was so generally elegant in his fancy of dress for the stage that he was often followed in his fashion, but in the street his plainness of habit was remarkable.

In March, 1713-14, Mrs Wilks left this world, to the inconsolable sorrow of her worthy husband. He continued unmarried upwards of seven years. In the meantime he renewed his acquaintance with Mrs. Fell, relict of Charles Fell, Esq., of an ancient family in Lancashire, and married her. Mr. Wilks's excellence in comedy was never once disputed, but the best judges extol him for the different parts in tragedy, as Hamlet, Earl of Essex, Shore, Macduff, Moness in "Tamerlane," Jaffier in "Venice Preserved," and a countless catalogue of other parts in tragedy, which he was allowed to perform in their full perfection. He was not only perfect in every part he acted, but in those that were concerned with him in every scene, which often prevented mistakes.

Upon his first arrival, Powell, who was now in possession of all the chief parts of Mountfort, and the only actor that stood in Wilks's way, in seeming civility, offered him his choice of whatever he thought fit, to make his first appearance in, though, in reality, the favour was intended to hurt him. But Wilks rightly judged it more modest to accept only of a part of Powell's, and which Mountfort had never acted, that of Palamede in Dryden's "Marriage à la Mode." Here, too, he had the advantage of having the ball played into his hand by the inimitable Mrs Mountfort, who was then his Melantha in the same play. Whatever fame Wilks had brought with him from Ireland he as yet appeared but a very raw actor to what he was afterwards allowed to be. But, however, he was young, erect, of a pleasing aspect, and, on the whole, gave the town and the stage sufficient hopes of him. I ought to make some

allowances, too, for the restraint he must naturally have been under, from his first appearance upon a new stage. But from that he soon recovered, and grew daily more in favour not only of the town but likewise of the patentee, whom Powell, before Wilks's arrival, had treated in almost what manner he pleased

Upon this visible success of Wilks, the pretended contempt which Powell had held him in began to sour into an open jealousy, he now plainly saw he was a formidable rival, saw, too, that other people saw it. But Wilks, happening to be as jealous of his fame as the other, you may imagine such clashing candidates could not be long without a rupture. In short, a challenge, I very well remember, came from Powell, when he was hot-headed, but the next morning he was cool enough to let it end in favour of Wilks. Yet, however the magnanimity on either part might subside, the animosity was as deep in the heart as ever, though it was not afterwards so openly avowed. For when Powell found that intimidating would not carry his point, but that Wilks, when provoked, would really give battle, he (Powell) grew so out of humour that he cocked his hat and in his passion walked off to the service of the company in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

His co-manager, Cibber, reviewing his history, describes his coming to town from Dublin to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Mountfort.

But Wilks never lost an hour of precious time, and was, in all his parts, perfect to such an exactitude, that I question if in forty years he ever five times changed or misplaced an article in any one of them. To be master of this uncommon diligence is adding to the gift of Nature all that is in an actor's power, and this duty of studying perfect, whatever actor is remiss in, he will proportionably find that Nature may have been kind to him in vain. . . . I cannot but confess, in the general infection, I had my share of it, nor was my too critical excuse for it a good one, viz. that scarce one part in five that fell to my lot was worth the labour. But

to show respect to an audience is worth the best actor's labour, and his business considered, he must be a very imprudent one that comes before them with a conscious negligence of what he is about. But Wilks was never known to make any of these venial distinctions, nor, however bairn his part may be, could bear even the self-reproach of favouring his memory. And I have been astonished to see him swallow a volume of froth and insipidity in a new play that we were sure could not live above three days, though favoured and recommended to the stage by some good person of quality

But, besides this indispensable quality of diligence, Wilks had the advantage of a sober character in private life, which Powell not having the least regard to, laboured under the unhappy disfavour, not to say contempt of the publick, to whom his licentious courses were no secret Even when he did well that natural prejudice pursued him, neither the hero nor the gentleman, the young Ammon nor the Dormant, could conceal from the conscious spectator the true George Powell. And this soit of disesteem or favour every actor will feel, and more or less have his share of as he has, or has not, a due regard to his private life and reputation.\*

One of the characteristic disagreements is thus recounted. It shows Wilks's curious temper

Much about this time, then, there came over from the Dublin theatre two uncelebrated actors to pick up a few pence among us in the winter, as Wilks had a year or two before done on the other side the water in the summer. To acquit himself therefore with a better grace, Wilks so ordered it, that his Hibernian friends were got upon our stage before any other manager had well heard of their arrival. Here now the different elements in our tempers began to work with us While Wilks was only animated by a grateful hospitality to his friends, Doggett was ruffled into a storm, and looked upon

\* It would have added weight to this admirable advice had the writer carried it out in his own practice He was, indeed, a notorious defaulter, and it is amusing that he was as signally deficient as the actor he reprobates, and as little an imitator of the actor whom he praises.

this generosity as so much insult Wilks was treating his friends at our expence, who were scarce acquainted with them for it seems all this was to end in their having a benefit-play in the height of the season, for the unprofitable service they had done us, without our consent or desire to employ them. Upon this Dogget bounced and grew almost as untractable as Wilks himself

Dogget endeavoured still to seem uneasy by his starting a new objection, which was, that we could not be sure even of the charge they were to pay for it, for Wilks, said he, you know will go any lengths to make it a good day to them, and may whisper the doorkeepers to give them the ready money taken and return the account in such tickets only as these actors have not themselves disposed of To make this easy too, I gave him my word to be answerable for the charge myself But so it happened (whether as Dogget had suspected or not I cannot say), the ready money received fell ten pounds short of the sum they had agreed to pay for it Upon the Saturday following (the day on which we constantly made up our accounts) I went early to the office and inquired if the ten pounds had yet been paid in , but not hearing that one shilling of it had found its way thither, I immediately supplied the sum out of my own pocket, and directed the treasurer to charge it received from me in the deficient receipt of the benefit-day. That the party most obliged was the most offended, and the offence was imputed to me, who had been ten pounds out of pocket, to be able to commit it, for when Wilks found in the account how spitefully the ten pounds had been paid in, he took me aside into the adjacent stone passage and with some warmth asked me what I meant by pretending to pay in this ten pounds ? To which I replied that I had given my word to Dogget the charge of the benefit should be fully paid, and since his friends had neglected it, I found myself bound to make it good Upon which he told me I was mistaken if I thought he did not see into the bottom of all this —that Dogget and I were always endeavouring to thwart and make him uneasy , but he was able to stand upon his own legs, and we should find he would not be used so That he took this payment of the ten pounds as an insult upon him and a slight to his friends , but rather than suffer it he would tear

the whole business to pieces That I knew it was in his power to do it; and if he could not do a civil thing to a friend without all this senseless rout about it, he could be received in Ireland upon his own terms, and could as easily mend a company there as he had done here That if he were gone, Dogget and I would not be able to keep the doors open a week, and by G—— he would not be a drudge for nothing That he might be sure, if I had thought my paying in the ten pounds could have been so ill-received, I should have been glad to have saved it Upon this he seemed to mutter something to himself and walked off, as if he had a mind to be alone I took the occasion and returned to Dogget to finish our accounts In about six minutes Wilks came in to us, not in the best humour it may be imagined, yet not in so ill a one but that he took his share of the ten pounds without showing the least contempt of it, which, had he been proud enough to have refused or to have paid in himself, I might have thought he intended to make good his menaces, and that the injury I had done him would never have been forgiven; but it seems we had different ways of thinking

Of this kind more or less delightful was the life I led, with this impatient man, for full twenty years

Tony Aston will pleasantly introduce the third manager

Dogget once attempted a serious character in “*Oedipus*” When he came to these words “But O! I wish Pharbæs had perished in that very moment!” the audience conceived that it was spoken like Hob in his dying speech They burst out into a loud laughter. Mr. Dogget was a little, lively, spract man, his behaviour modest, chearful, and complaisant. He sung in company very agreeably, and in public very comically.

A Zoffany-like sketch indeed. He goes on

He danced the “Cheshire Round” full as well as the fam’d Captin George, but with more nature and nimbleness. I have had the pleasure of his conversation for one year, when I travelled with him in his strolling company and found him a

man of very good sense but illiterate, for he wrote me word thus. “*Sir, I will give you a hole (instead of whole) share*” He dress’d neat and something fine—in a plain cloth coat and a brocaded waistcoat. But he is so recent *satis est*. He gave his yearly water-badge out of a warm principle, being a *stanch* Revolution-Whig. I cannot part with this *nonpareil* without saying that he was the most faithful, pleasant actor that ever was—for he never deceived his audience—because, while they gazed at him, he was working up the joke which broke out suddenly in involuntary acclamations and laughter. Whereas our modern actors are fumbling the dull minutes, keeping the gaping pit in suspence of something delightful a coming. He was the best face player and gesticulator, and a thorough master of the several dialects, except the Scots . . . While I travelled with him each sharer kept his horse, and was every-where respected as a gentleman

Dogget—another Irishman, like Wilks—is more remem-bered for his famous waterman’s “ coat and badge,” rowed for every year, than for his acting. He had a soul for business, for regularity of accounts, for checking and signing, and to him is no doubt owing a good deal of the material prosperity of the new venture \*

Thus pleasantly does Steele rally his friend, and at the same time aid him :

January 12, 1709. From the famous Mr Thomas Dogget : “ Sir,—On Monday next will be acted, for my benefit, the comedy of ‘Love for Love’ If you will do me the honour to appear there I will publish in the bills ‘that it is to be performed at the request of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq.,’ and question not but that it will bring me as great an audience as ever was at the house since the Morocco Am Veindu was there ”

Being naturally an encourager of wit, as well as bound to

\* In 1716 appeared this notice “August This being the day of His Majesty’s accession to the throne, there will be given by Mr Dogget an orange-coloured livery, with a badge representing Liberty, to be rowed for by six watermen,” etc

it in the quality of censor, I returned the following answer.—“Mr. Dogget,—I am very well pleased with the choice you have made of so excellent a play, and have always looked upon you as the best of comedians. I shall, therefore, come in between the first and second act, and remain in the right-hand box over the pit till the end of the fourth.”

Such were the three managers. And at first setting out nothing could be better than the harmony or more prosperous than their course. There was no leisure for private dissensions. “Our daily receipts exceeded our imagination, and we seldom met as a board to settle our weekly accounts without the satisfaction of joint heirs just in possession of an unexpected estate that had been distantly entailed upon them. Such a sudden change of our condition, it may be imagined, could not but throw out of us a new spirit in almost every play we appeared in.” At the meetings of this board for settling the weekly accounts, everything under the jealous care of Dogget was gone on with in the most formal, precise way imaginable. Every little bill or docket, were it only for a shilling, had to be duly signed by each manager before it would be accepted at the treasury.

The Court also aided them. From the Queen now came an order which was of service to the new management in their reforms.

November 15th, 1711 Whereas we are informed that the orders we have already given for the reformation of the stage, by not permitting anything to be acted contrary to religion or good manners, have in great measure had the good end we proposed, and being further desirous to reform all other indecencies and disorders of the stage, our will and pleasure is, and we do hereby strictly command, that no person of what quality soever presume to stand behind the scenes or come upon the stage, either before or during the acting of an opera

or play, and that no person come into either of our houses for opera or comedy, without paying first the established prices for the respective places.

All which orders we strictly command the managers, both of our opera and comedy, to see exactly observed and obeyed, and if any person whatsoever shall disobey this our known pleasure and command, we shall proceed against them as contemners of our royal authority and disturbers of the public peace

But their tact and sagacity was shown in the tone of the first pieces selected for performance, and which brought them not only exceeding profit but fame.

The production of Addison's well-known play is one of the remarkable theatrical events of the age. The modesty of the author, or perhaps his apprehensions, kept it back, unfinished, for many years, for, in truth, the subject and the speeches with which the subject was set off made it dangerous in the inflammable state of parties

"In 1703, nine years before it was acted," says one of the managers, "I had the pleasure of reading the first four acts, which was all of it then written, privately with Sir Richard Steele. It may be needless to say it was impossible to lay them out of my hand till I had gone through them. but my satisfaction was as highly disappointed when he told me, whatever spirit Mr Addison had shown in his writing it, he doubted he would never have courage enough to let his 'Cato' stand the censure of an English audience, that it had only been the amusement of his leisure hours in Italy, and was never intended for the stage. This poetical diffidence Sir Richard himself spoke of with some concern 'Good God, what a part would Betterton make of Cato!' In the latter end of Queen Anne's reign, when our national politics had changed hands, the friends of Mr. Addison then thought it a proper time to animate the public with the sentiments of

‘Cato’ It was no sooner finished than hurried to the stage, in April, 1712, at a time when three days a-week were usually appointed for the benefit-plays of particular actors but a work of that critical importance was to make its way through all private considerations, it was, therefore, Mondays excepted, acted every day for a month, to constantly crowded houses. As the author had made us a present of whatever profits he might have claimed from it, we thought ourselves obliged to spare no cost in the proper decorations of it. Its coming so late in the season to the stage proved of particular advantage to the sharing actors, because the harvest of our annual gains was generally over before the middle of March; many select audiences being then usually reserved in favour to the benefits of private actors, which fixed engagements naturally abated the receipts of the days before and after them but this unexpected after-crop of ‘Cato’ largely supplied to us those deficiencies, and was almost equal to two fruitful seasons in the same year, at the close of which, the three managing actors found themselves each a gainer of thirteen hundred and fifty pounds”

The author attempted to read his play in the green-room, but an actor had to come to his assistance. There are traditions of the attempts by well-known authors at reading their pieces to the players. Goldsmith had such a brogue and read in so slovenly a style that it was difficult to understand him. Bickerstaff, another Irishman, read “in a voice so thick, and in such an embarrassed style, that he was not only unintelligible but sent his audience to sleep. . . . It was the same with Thomson, whose broad Scotch caused laughter at pathetic places.” Congreve read so miserably that the actors good-naturedly took this duty on themselves. Dryden, Cibber says, had so “cold, flat, and unaffectioning a style” as would scarcely

be credited The mad Lee, Cibber himself, and Rowe, all read finely

During the rehearsals of "Cato" a visitor came behind the scenes, Dr. Swift, who describes what he saw in a very natural way "I was this morning," he writes from town on April 6th, 1712, "at ten, at the rehearsal of Mr. Addison's play, there were not above half-a-score of us to see it. *We stood on the stage*, and it was foolish enough to see the actors prompted every moment, and the poet directing them, and the drab (Mrs Oldfield) that acts Cato's daughter *out* in the middle of a passionate part, and then calling out, 'What's next?' The Bishop of Clagher was there, too, but he stood privately in a gallery" It seems like a scene of to-day, and it would not be difficult to bring in even a bishop—to see a rehearsal of one of Mr Tennyson's plays

The decorations were attended to by Cibber. Macaulay says it would not have pleased the skilful eye of Mr. Macready. "Juba's waistcoat blazed in its gold lace, Marcia's hoop was worthy of a duchess on her birthday, and Cato wore a wig worth fifty guineas" The prologue was by Pope Sir R Steele undertook to fill the house. All the Whigs, lords, and politicians were in the boxes, while a strong party came from the City. As is well known, the piece "succeeded vastly," owing to the Tories ingeniously applauding what seemed to tell against them. Both sides, indeed, found allusions enough to applaud \* The play is certainly a good solid one, in the classical French manner, and will always be read with interest. It was performed eighteen times during its first run, and was

\* It brought out a bitter attack from Dennis, the professional critic, and as curious a defence from Pope A feature of the century was that nearly every play of note engendered a cloud of controversial pamphlets This was, of course, owing to the piece being written for publication—a great source of profit—as well as for representation

introduced with no less than eight "copies of verses" Dr. Johnson, in his pedantic style, speaks of it as "rather a succession of just sentiments in elegant language. Nothing here excites or assuages emotion; here is no magical power of raising fantastic terror and wild anxiety. The events are expected without solicitude, and are remembered without joy or sorrow. Of the agents we have no care. Cato is a being above our solicitude; a man of whom the gods take care, and whom we leave to their care with heedless confidence."

This play was performed by the young princes and princesses many years later, "under the direction of Mr Quin," in presence of the Court and nobility. Prince Edward and Prince George spoke a prologue and epilogue.

However successful "Cato" proved to be, one would have expected from the agreeable creator of Sir Roger something in the vein of genuine comedy. Such seems to have been his own impression, for a few years later, in 1715, we find him bringing out "The Drummer" at Drury Lane. This piece has always seemed to fair judges truly diverting, and will give the average reader half an hour's real entertainment. Most justly did Dr Warton describe it as "that excellent and neglected comedy, that just picture of life and real manners, where the poet never speaks in his own person, or totally drops or forgets a character for the sake of introducing a brilliant simile or acute remark where no train is laid for wit." The intrigue is interesting, and the humour of Villiers in the key of "The Spectator." Yet it was a complete failure, running but for three nights, and as his friend Steele says admirably. "'The Drummer' made no figure on the stage, though exquisitely well acted, and when I observe this, I say a much harder thing of the stage than of the comedy." Addison never acknowledged the piece.

## CHAPTER III.

MR. BARTON BOOTH.

THIS play, however, brought into notice (indeed, made his fortune) an actor named Barton Booth, whose performance of the part gave the greatest satisfaction to the Tories, who loaded him with presents and compliments. By a curious yet not uncommon delusion, our actor was associated in the public mind with the part he played, and the Tories accepting his Cato as a protest in favour of their politics, collected fifty guineas from the box company and presented it to him.

The managers were somewhat alarmed at this triumph, which made one of their corps so powerful. It was known that he was the friend and *protégé* of Lord Bolingbroke, who had great influence at Court, and which might be used in the direction of patents, etc. Dogget, by way of crafty neutrality and device, suggested that they also should make him a present of fifty guineas. The discussion between the three managers on this delicate matter was dramatic. Cibber, who was shrewder than the rest, forecasted that the lucky actor would be content with nothing less than a share in their patent, which he would give him readily. Why then throw away their fifty guineas?

“ Wilks, who wanted nothing but abilities to be as cunning

as Dogget, was so charmed with the proposal, that he longed that moment to make Booth the present with his own hands, upon which I turned to Dogget with a cold smile, and told him that if Booth could be purchased at so cheap a rate, it would be one of the best proofs of his economy we had ever been beholden to I therefore desired we might have a little patience, that our doing it too hastily might be only making sure of an occasion to throw the fifty guineas away, for *if we should be obliged to do better for him*, we could never expect that Booth would think himself bound in honour to refund them This seemed so absurd an argument to Wilks, that he began, with his usual freedom of speech, to treat it as a pitiful evasion of their intended generosity; but Dogget, who was not so wide of my meaning, clapping his hand upon mine, said, with an air of security, 'Oh, don't trouble yourself, there must be two words to that bargain; let me alone to manage that matter' To conclude, my objections that the money would be only thrown away, etc, were overruled, and the same night Booth had the fifty guineas, which he received with a thankfulness that made Wilks and Dogget perfectly easy, insomuch that they seemed for some time to triumph in their conduct, and often endeavoured to laugh my jealousy out of countenance, but, in the following winter, the game happened to take a different turn, and then, if it had been a laughing matter, I had as strong an occasion to smile at their former security"

These forebodings were presently to be justified Booth enjoyed the powerful protection of patrons at Court, friends made at the university, and others. As he was one of the great players and characters of theatrical history, we may introduce him and let him cross the stage at leisure

"This really great man and actor was born a gentleman, being the youngest son of John Booth, Esq, and a squire of

Lancashire, and related to the Earl of Warrington. He was educated at Westminster, under Dr Busby, from whom he imbibed a true classical taste" "He was ever spoken of at Westminster School with delight and respect," says Theo Cibber, in the rare account of this actor's life, and in an epilogue at a school performance long after he was referred to with pride

Old Roscius to our Booth must bow,  
'Twas then but art, 'tis nature now

At one of the regular Westminster plays he showed his talent, "in which the musical sweetness of his voice and his elegance of deportment drew the applause of all"

Of him says Chetwood

At that celebrated school the son received his education under the correction (as he called it) of the great Dr Busby and Dr Knipe. He informed me (Chetwood) the first look he cast towards the theatre was from the applause he received in performing in the "Andria" of Terence in Latin, at Westminster School, which perverted his thoughts from the pulpit, for which his father intended him. At seventeen he was chose out for the university, and had orders to prepare for his journey, but his inclinations prevented the designs of his friends

He first applied to Mr Betterton, then to Mr Smith, two celebrated actors, but they decently refused him for fear of the resentment of his family. But this did not prevent his pursuing the point in view, therefore he resolved for Ireland, and safely arrived in June, 1698. His first rudiments Mr Ashbury taught him, and his first appearance was in the part of Oroonoko, where he acquitted himself so well to a crowded audience that Mr Ashbury rewarded him with a present of five guineas, which was the more acceptable as his last shilling was reduced to brass (as he informed me). But an odd accident fell out upon this occasion. It being very warm weather, in his last scene of the play, as he waited to go on, he inadvertently

wiped his face, that when he entered he had the appearance of a chimney-sweeper (his own words). At his entrance he was surprised at the variety of noises he heard in the audience (for he knew not what he had done) that a little confounded him, till he received an extraordinary clap of applause, which settled his mind. The play was desired for the next night of acting, when an actress fitted a crape to his face, with an opening proper for the mouth, and shaped in form for the nose, but in the first scene one part of the crape slipped off, "and, zounds!" said he (he was a little apt to swear) "I looked like a magpie! When I came off they lampblacked me for the rest of the night,\* that I was flead before it could be got off again."

He remained here near two years, and in that time by letters reconciled himself to his friends in England, and returned with great theatrical improvement, where he gradually stepped to perfection.

In 1701 he played some time in a country company, and returning to London, got acquainted with Mr. Bowman, a late venerable actor, who was on the stage from the reign of Charles the Second to that of his present Majesty. By Bowman's assistance, and the recommendation of Lord Fitzharding, then a Lord of the Bedchamber to the Prince of Denmark, he was introduced as a promising genius to Mr. Betterton, who conceived a high opinion of him at their first meeting. And no wonder. His person, his address, his whole deportment showed the gentleman, and Mr. Betterton, who had a quick perception of the many requisites Booth possessed to qualify him for a complete actor, immediately received him into his company. The first part he performed on that stage was Maximus in "Valentinian". Never was greater applause bestowed than Booth received on that occasion.

His triumph in Addison's play of "Cato" in 1712 we have seen. Previously, in 1704, he was fortunate to make a respectable marriage with a daughter of Sir William Baikham, Bart., of Norwich, but this lady died within six years.

It is a point of difficulty to ascertain what description

\* "The composition," adds Chetwood, "for blackening the face consists of ivory black and pomatum, which is with some pains cleaned with fresh butter."

of person Miss Santlow the dancer, his second wife, was. The matter is not of importance, save from the curious circumstance that she has been described as the best and worst of her sex. Her lover and husband never flagged in his devotion, celebrating her before and after marriage in rapturous verses. His lines to her dancing are pretty :

With new delight the object we survey,  
While in the winds her wanton streamers play  
Strange force of motion ! that subdues the soul,  
Like sweetest music's magic pow'r !  
That can the noisy multitude controul !  
Can eloquence herself do more ?

But now the flying fingers strike the lyre !  
The sprightly notes the nymph inspire ,  
She whuls around, she bounds, she springs !  
As if Jove's messenger had lent her wings

“Nor was the lover lost in the husband,” says Chetwood quaintly ; “he continued his affectionate regard, and she continued to deserve it, till it became, as Thomson well expresses it, love by long experience mellowed into friendship. Imitating an ode of Horace, long after his marriage he introduced additional lines in her praise

Grant my desire ! A homely seat,  
Far from the guilty and the great ,  
A limpid stream—an ancient grove ,  
And health and joy to her I love  
Grant my desire, propitious Jove !  
Happy the hour when first our souls were join'd !  
The social virtues, and the chearful mind  
Have ever crown'd our days, beguil'd our pain ;  
Strangers to discord and her clam'rous train.

This little effort he prefaced with this apology. “My obligations to a friend, who deserves infinitely more than I

have said of her, interrupted my first design, and led me into the digression which occasioned the conclusion —B. BOOTH."

Theo Cibber tells us that, "in the year 1719, Mr Booth married the celebrated Mrs Hester Santlow. She was a beautiful woman, lovely in her countenance, delicate in her form, a pleasing actress, and a most admirable dancer—generally allowed, in the last-mentioned part of her profession, to have been superior to all who had been seen before her, and perhaps she has not been since excelled. But, to do her justice, she was more than all this—she was an excellent good wife, which he has frequently, in my hearing, talked of in such a manner as nothing but a sincere heartfelt gratitude could express, and I was often an eye-witness (our families being intimate) of their conjugal felicity. Her tender careful attendance on him during his tedious illness will not soon be forgot by his friends."

Bellchambers, the editor of Cibber's "Apology," speaks with the utmost severity of the lady, calling her *sans fagon* an opprobrious name, and talks of the "infamy" of the connection. She had a large fortune, which, he says, explains Mr. Booth's devotion. The author of the "Biographia Dramatica" describes her as a woman of the most amiable disposition and valuable companion. The worthy Chetwood also commends, and Victor thrice "grows wanton in her praise" "To whom," says he, addressing her in a dedication so late as 1771, "can this third volume of the 'History of the Theatres' be addressed with more propriety than to one who so early in life (above half a century ago) made so agreeable a figure there? And yet I know you had rather pass your remaining days forgotten as an actress than to have your youth recollected in the most favourable light. But I hope you will excuse the liberty I take in commemorating the delight which the public received from your performances, while you were an ornament to the theatre!"

for the proof of which I can turn to records more considerable than my own ” It was therefore no wonder that Mr. Booth, the most considerable man in the theatre, should become a lover “ Some time after this accomplished lover became a husband, and, till his death, one of the most affectionate that ever woman was blessed with To that I can bear witness— as I often reflect with pleasure, that, at so early a part of my life, I had the happiness of being distinguished by the friendship of a man of his exalted merit, descended from a noble family, a scholar, and a gentleman, and not only the first in his profession, but, at that period, even without the shadow of a rival ! At his lamented death, in the year 1733, you prudently retired from the public eye, and have enjoyed a long exemplary life of widowhood with that serenity and elegance as would have done honour to any rank or any profession ! Permit me, madam, to congratulate you on the last proof of your good sense and gratitude, viz your determin'd resolution to erect a monument to the lov'd memory of Mr Booth ”

To all unsupported slanders may be offered Chetwood's declaration, “ notwithstanding his exuberance of fancy he was untainted in his morals In his younger days he admired none of the heathen deities so much as jolly Bacchus , yet it never marred his study or his stomach. But immediately after his marriage with Mrs. Santlow, whose wise conduct, beauty, and winning behaviour so wrought upon him that home and her company were his chief happiness, he intensely condemned the folly of drinking out of season, and from one extream fell, I think, into the other too suddenly, for his appetite for food had no abatement. I have often known Mrs. Booth, out of extream tenderness to him, order the table to be removed for fear of overloading his stomach.”

The praises given to this great actor by his admirers are worth quoting, as creditable to the nice discrimination and

admirable style of those who criticised him. Thus Aaron Hill writes to Victor

Two advantages distinguished him in the strongest light from the rest of his fraternity. He had learning to understand perfectly whatever it was his part to speak, and judgment to know how far it agreed or disagreed with his character. Hence arose a peculiar grace, which was visible to every spectator.

Here is a nice distinction.

He could soften and slide over, with a kind of elegant negligence, the improprieties in a part he acted, while, on the contrary, he would dwell with energy upon the beauties, as if he exerted a latent spirit which had been kept back for such an occasion, that he might alarm, awaken, and transport in those places only, where the dignity of his own good sense could be supported by that of his author.

Then Cibber next takes up his praises

The tones of his voice were all musical, and he had so excellent an ear, no one ever heard a dissonant note come from him. He was not only harmonious, but properly so, while he filled the ear he spoke to the heart, avoiding a monotone, which has been too frequently perceived in some other actors of merit . . . And his articulation was so excellent, he was heard to the farthest part of the theatre when he almost whispered.

Again.

He had the deportment of a nobleman, and so well became a Star and Garter, he seemed born to it; and would have made as good a figure in the drawing-room as on the stage. His countenance had a manly sweetness, so happily formed for expression, that he could mark every passion with a strength to reach the eye of the most distant spectator, without losing that comeliness which charmed those who sat near him.

A criticism on his Othello helps us to a view of the vices of inferior acting.

In "Othello," the heart-breaking anguish of his jealousy would have drawn tears from the most obdurate, yet all his grief, though most feelingly expressed, was never beneath the hero when he wept, his tears broke from him perforce—he never whined, whined, or blubbered. In his rage, he never mouthed or ranted. He remembered the poet's advice, "Observe the golden rule of not too much." If some actors of a later date had made this rule their guide, the stage would not have afforded so many repeated examples of extravagant affected starts, twitching of limbs, jerkings of the body, expansion of the hands, sprawling of the fingers, and other uncouth violences, the mockery of attitude. These mummeries, on the many, may pass for spirited action, yet are, in reality, but a set of mechanical motions.

Mr Booth had a good taste for statuary and painting, and where he could not come at original pictures, he spared no pains or expense to get the best drawings and prints. These he frequently studied, and sometimes borrowed attitudes from, which he so judiciously introduced, so finely executed, and fell into them with so easy a transition, that these masterpieces of his art seemed but the effect of nature.

Though I may appear to have dwelt somewhat too minutely on the history of these personages, I must own to having done so purposely, as it illustrates the social life of the time in connection with the stage, and carries on the history of the stage itself.

## CHAPTER IV.

### MANAGERIAL DISPUTES.

Booth, then, having acquired this high position and influence, determined to be a manager, and his application was a curious one, from the style in which he urged his claims to being admitted into the partnership. He pressed Lord Lansdown to support him. He could not hope, he said, to succeed "but by *his* persuasion and interest with the Chamberlain" "The same power," he urged, "that redeemed the managers from the patentees and procured their licence, may with the *same ease and justice add another actor to their number*" He promised, in conclusion, that "all that an unfortunate can give to those that generously made him easy in his circumstances will be due to you"

This shows that the whole was a matter of course, and a thing of pure Court favour. On both sides various arts were used to forward and hinder his success "To reward his merit," says Chetwood, "he was joined in the patent, though great interest was made against him by the other patentees and to prevent his soliciting his patrons at Court, then at Windsor, gave out plays every night, where Mr. Booth had a principal part. Notwithstanding this step, he had a chariot

and six of a nobleman's waiting for him at the end of every play, that whipt him the twenty miles in three hours, and brought him back to the business of the theatre the next night. He told me not one nobleman in the kingdom had so many sets of horses at command as he had at that time, having no less than eight, the first set carrying him to Hounslow from London (ten miles), and the next set ready waiting with another chariot to carry him to Windsor."

"I remember," adds Cibber's son, "in some conversations between Mr Booth and my father (since they became joint-managers) to have heard this affair talked of, when they sometimes smiled at poor Mr Wilks's impatience under the disagreeable circumstances of having a partner put on him by a peremptory command, which Mr Cibber was as much averse to as his colleague, Master Robert, but while he (Mr Cibber) endeavoured with temper to oppose Mr Booth's being a sharer with him, he desired at the same time, if Mr. Booth succeeded, that for the common good they might amicably join their endeavours for the success of the theatre. So, without any shy looks to each other, they used frequently to set out after play (in the month of May) to Windsor, where the Court then was, to push their different interests—Mr. Cibber frankly declaring he wished to give Mr Booth all the rewards, etc., he as an actor could possibly deserve, or they as managers could afford to bestow, that it was not Mr Booth he wanted to prevent having a share in the management, but he wanted no more sharers."

This was akin to the custom of what was called "quartering" a person on an existing placeholder, the new incumbent being styled a "rider," who often rode on three or four placeholders. As the dramatic licence was the purest monopoly, the Crown might be justified in dealing as it pleased with so valuable a privilege.

After our return from Oxford, Booth was at full leisure to solicit his admission to a share in the management, in which he succeeded about the beginning of the following winter. Accordingly a new licence (recalling all former licences) was issued, wherein Booth's name was added to those of the other managers. But still there was a difficulty in his qualification to be adjusted: what consideration he should allow for an equal title to our stock of clothes, scenes, etc., without which the licence was of no more use than the stock was without the licence; or, at least, if there were any difference, the former managers seemed to have the advantage in it, the stock being entirely theirs, and three parts in four of the licence, for Collier, though now but a fifth manager, still insisted on his former appointment of 700*l.* a year, which in equity ought certainly to have been proportionably abated. But Court favour was not always measured by that yard. Collier's matter was soon out of the question, his pretensions were too visible to be contested. But the affair of Booth was not so clear a point, the Lord Chamberlain therefore only recommended it to be adjusted among ourselves, which, to say the truth, at that time was a greater indulgence than I expected. Let us see, then, how this critical case was handled. Wilks was of opinion that to set a good round value upon our stock was the only way to come near an equivalent for the diminution of our shares which the admission of Booth must occasion; but Dogget insisted that he had no mind to dispose of any part of his property, and therefore would set no price upon it at all. Here, now, will be shown another instance of our different tempers: Dogget (who in all matters that concerned our common weal and interest little regarded our opinion, and even to an obstinacy walked by his own) looked only out of humour at what I had said, and, without thinking himself obliged to give any reason for it, declared he would maintain his property. Wilks (who upon the same occasion was as remarkably ductile as, when his superiority on the stage was in question, he was assuming and intractable) said, for his part, provided our business of acting was not interrupted, he did not care what we did, but, in short, he was for playing on, come what would of it. This last part of his declaration I did not dislike, and therefore I desired we might all enter into an

immediate treaty with Booth upon the terms of his admission. Dogget still sullenly replied that he had no occasion to enter into any treaty. Wilks then, to soften him, proposed that, if I liked it, Dogget might undertake it himself I agreed. No, he would not be concerned in it. I then offered the same trust to Wilks, if Dogget approved of it Wilks said he was not good at making of bargains, but if I was willing he would rather leave it to me. Dogget at this rose up and said we might both do as we pleased, but that nothing but the law should make him part with his property; and so went out of the room. After which he never came among us more, either as an actor or manager.

By his having in this abrupt manner abdicated his post in our government, what he left of it naturally devolved upon Wilks and myself Though by our indentures tripartite we could not dispose of his property without his consent, yet those indentures could not oblige us to fast because he had no appetite; and if the mill did not grind we could have no bread We therefore determined, at any hazard, to keep our business still going, and that our safest way would be to make the best bargain we could with Booth, one article of which was to be that Booth should stand equally answerable with us to Dogget for the consequence, to which Booth made no objection, and the rest of his agreement was to allow us six hundred pounds for his share in our property, which was to be paid by such sums as should arise from half his profits of acting, till the whole was discharged. Yet so cautious were we in this affair, that this agreement was only verbal on our part, though written and signed by Booth, as what entirely contented him.

That extraordinary being, Dogget, now behaved in a singularly obstinate fashion. There are a number of letters of his addressed to the Chamberlain, urging his grievances, and written in a querulous, wounded strain of complaint and injury\*—also in very indifferent spelling. He reminded him of his promise that the managers should be obliged to bring in their accounts and settle with him, but now six weeks

\* These are in Mr. Harvey's collection

had elapsed, "and I cannot obtain any *manor* [sic] of satisfaction. He hoped, therefore, he would be excused if he took such method of obtaining redress as he should be advised." that is, he *asked for leave* to go to law with his colleagues

On January 16th, 1713, we find Cibber and Wilks "humbly remonstrating" to the Chamberlain against this behaviour, and asking that he be compelled to pay them "their proportion of money in his hands," and which he refused to do. They hoped, "as they ran hazards in admitting Mr Booth," they will be protected against the proceedings of their colleague. At foot of this appeal Collier adds a note, in such familiar strain as shows the terms he was on with so high a functionary of the Court "Sir,—I hope you will immediately inform His Majesty of Mr. Dogget's behaviour, and sign an order for his being struck out of the licence" Here again we see how powerful was the control of the Court

In January, 1714, again Dogget wrote. "It is now seven or eight weeks since I delivered to you in writing, as you commanded me, such proposals as I did hope you would think so reasonable, that I should have had your order for my shares, which I have been kept out of ever since the new licence, the managers say by your direction, and Mr Cibber has told me I must sue for it if I will have it. Sir, my Lord Chamberlain did tell me my property would not be touched, and I had your own now for it too, and if after that I am forced into Westminster Hall to try whether it is or not," etc. And on January 14th he resumed the matter: "I would petition his Grace the Duke of Shrewsbury, but when I had the honour to wait upon him last I found I had the misfortune to have fallen under his displeasure, I cannot tell for what, but could not have believed I should have found such effects of it." Again he appealed to the "Hon. Mr. Coke, Vice-Chamberlain," on February 23rd, upon the subject of the licence; and on

April 17th "I have not bin able to obtaine any account nor any manor of sattisfaction, which I hope will excuse my taking such methodes as shall be advised proper to come at my rights".

The managers also continued making appeal. In a paper written by Wilks, and signed by himself, Cibber, and Booth, dated February 5th, 1714, they address "the Right Hon. Thomas Coke, Vice-Chamberlain of Her Majesty's Household, at Windsor" "The inclosed is what we consider absolutely necessary to be signed by all the managers for the better government of the company, and whereas the words of Her Majesty's licence subjects us to such orders as shall from time to time be sent us from the Lord Chamberlain for the tyme being, we therefore, sir, humbly beg for all our securities," etc. They also prepared an affidavit, dated January, 1714, signed by Wilks and Cibber, and witnessed by Ja. Medlycott "Robert Wilks and Colley Cibber jointly make oath that in November last they did inform Mr. Thomas Dogget that they had received a new licence for acting plays," etc. Then follows "The humble remonstrance of Robert Wilks and Colley Cibber, of the Theatre Royal" "Mr. Dogget has refused to pay any part of the said money, and has never joined in any one thing relating to the company, and has totally absented himself both as a manager and an actor ever since the present licence was in force. Mr Dogget notwithstanding has this very day demanded in writing his share of Mr. Wilks, before he proceeds to extremity," etc. This paper is entirely in the handwriting of Wilks, signed by himself and Cibber, attested by Booth, with a postscript in the handwriting of and signed by Collier. They also appealed in June to the Duke of Shrewsbury, detailing their troubles "I therefore humbly beg your Grace's favour and protection for Mr. Wilks and myself, in our having admitted Mr. Booth on reasonable terms to a share, notwithstanding the several

protests and menaces of Mr. Dogget against our so doing " "He one way or other played his part so well," says Cibber, "that in a few days after we received an order from the Vice-Chamberlain positively commanding us to pay Dogget his whole share, notwithstanding we had complained before of his having withdrawn himself from acting on the stage and from the management of it . . . This bitter pill, I confess, was more than I could down with, and therefore soon determined, at all events, never to take it. My only doubt was whether I could bring Wilks into the same sentiments (for he never cared to litigate anything that did not affect his figure upon the stage). I then proposed to him this expedient: that we should draw up a remonstrance neither seeming to refuse or comply with this order, but to start such objections and perplexing difficulties that should make the whole impracticable, that under such distractions as this would raise in our affairs, we could not be answerable to keep open our doors To this remonstrance we received an answer in writing, which varied something in the measures to accommodate matters with Dogget "

The only resource now for the unreasonable actor was to go to law. A bill was filed in Chancery. In this warfare Mr. Dogget was worsted, for, as Mr. Cibber says with some exultation, they had their three pockets to his one.

My first direction to our solicitor was, to use all possible delay that the law would admit of; a direction that lawyers seldom neglect; by this means we hung up our plaintiff about two years, in Chancery, 'till we were at full leisure to come to a hearing before the Lord Chancellor Cooper, which did not happen till after the accession of his late Majesty. The issue of it was this. Dogget had about fourteen days allowed him to make his election, whether he would return to act, as usual; but he, declaring by his counsel, that he rather chose to quit the stage, he was decreed six hundred pounds for his share in

our property, with 15 per cent interest, from the date of the last licence upon the receipt of which, both parties were to sign general releases, and severally to pay their own costs. By this decree, Dogget, when his lawyer's bill was paid, scarce got one year's purchase of what we had offered him without law, which (as he survived but seven years after it) would have been an annuity of five hundred pounds, and a *sinecure* for life.

The conclusion of this contest, described with the skill of a dramatist, may be told in Cibber's own words.

After our lawsuit was ended, Dogget, for some few years, could scarcely bear the sight of Wilks or myself, though, as shall be shown, for different reasons yet it was his misfortune to meet with us almost every day. Button's Coffee-house, so celebrated in "The Tatler" for the good company that came there, was at this time in its highest request. Addison, Steele, Pope, and several other gentlemen of different merit, then made it their constant rendezvous. Nor could Dogget decline the agreeable conversation there, though he was daily sure to find Wilks or myself in the same place to sour his share of it.

A letter, in which Cibber spoke kindly of him, being shown to Dogget.

One day, sitting over against him at the same coffee-house, where we often mixed at the same table, though we never exchanged a single syllable, he graciously extended his hand for a pinch of my snuff as this seemed, from him, a sort of breaking the ice of his temper, I took courage upon it to break silence on my side, and asked him how he liked it. To which, with a slow hesitation, naturally assisted by the action of his taking the snuff, he replied "Umph! the best—umph! —I have tasted a great while." After a few days of these coy, ladylike compliances on his side, we grew into a more conversible temper at last, I took a proper occasion, and desired he would be so frank with me as to let me know what was his real dislike, or motive, that made him throw up so good an income as his share with us annually brought him in? And further,

to encourage him to be open, I told him that if I had done anything that had particularly disengaged him, I was ready, if he could put me in the way, to make him any amends in my power. All he said came from him by half sentences and innuendoes, as, "No, he had not taken anything particularly ill, for his part, he was very easy as he was, but where others were to dispose of his property as they pleased—if you had stood it out, as I did, Booth might have paid a better price for it. You were too much afraid of the Court, but that's all over. There were other things in the playhouse. No man of spirit—in short, to be always pestered and provoked by a trifling wasp—a vain—shallow—a man would sooner beg his bread than bear it." Here it was easy to understand him I therefore asked him what he had to bear that I had not my share of "No; it was not the same thing," he said. "You can play with a bear, or let him alone, and do what he would, but I could not let him lay his paws upon me, without being hurt, you did not feel him as I did.—And for a man to be cutting of throats, upon every trifle, at my time of day! If I had been as covetous as he thought me, maybe I might have borne it as well as you, but I would not be a Lord of the Treasury if such a temper as Wilks's were to be at the head of it."

It is pleasant to think that they were thus reconciled Doggett, who took to trafficking in the Funds, amassed a grand fortune, and died at Eltham, in Kent, in September, 1721 \*

\* It should have been mentioned that the race now annually rowed on the Thames was a testimonial of zeal and loyalty for the House of Hanover, the day fixed being always August 1st, the anniversary of accession of that House

## CHAPTER V.

1711-12.

### BEHIND THE SCENES AT DRURY LANE.

THE new management, consisting of Messrs. Cibber, Wilks, and Booth, were to inaugurate an era of order, decency, and prosperity with a long reign, and deserved the moderate panegyrics delivered by one of the members. Not one of the partners seemed to be endowed with gifts of direction; yet this combination somehow resulted in success. This was ensured first by excellent acting, the three being all good actors. Their prosperity was, no doubt, the bond that kept them together under such defects. One of the firm was of a thrifty penurious temper, which held the prodigality of the other two in check. The company was a strong one, consisting of forty performers, among whom were found Messrs Wilks, Booth, Cibber, Dogget, Johnson, Mills, Pinkethman, Bullock, sen., Pack, Bullock, jun., Norris, Estcourt, Bowen, Powell, Elrington, Bowman, Keene, Leigh, Ryan, Cross, Spiller, Thurmond, Griffith, and Mesdames Oldfield, Willis, Powell, Porter, Sanders, Rogers, Santlow.

Cibber is not slack in dwelling on the failings of his co-managers, and it is amusing to note the air of superiority with

which he points out their respective deficiencies in administration. He seems to hold himself out as the one who alone kept up the prosperity and respectability of the undertaking. Yet it is curious to find him considered the peccant member of the firm. Such a manager there never was. No one more unpopular, owing to his malice, vanity, and insolence of office. His treatment of authors and actors was marked by the greatest jealousy and harshness. The former, indeed, he hated, and used to call "singing-birds," which he was fond of choking. Like the practice in the modern Théâtre Français, where a committee sits to judge a play, the three managers would hold a meeting to hear the author read his piece. "The court sitting," says "The Laureate," "Chancellor Cibber (for the other two, like Masters in Chancery, sat only for form's sake, did not presume to judge) nodded to the author to open his manuscript. The author begins to read, in which if he failed to please the corrector he would sometimes condescend to read it for him. If the play struck him very warmly, as it would if he found anything new in it, and he thought he could particularly shine as an actor, he would then lay down his pipe and cry. 'There is something in this. I don't know but it may do. I will play such a part.'" But when he was in his vein for choking a singing-bird it was different. Davies says, which seems natural, that of the three managers he was the one least esteemed by the players. He spared no pains in teaching them his own characters, but he could not refrain, as he did so, from sarcastic remarks. The writer of "The Laureate" says he was "odious" to them. Victor told Davies, "Bickerstaffe, a comedian, having acquired an income of 4*l.* per week, Cibber, in an economical fit, retrenched him of half. The man, who had a family, was struck at the sudden diminution of his allowance, and knowing whence his misfortune was derived, waited on Cibber, and flatly told him

that, as he could not subsist on the small sum to which he had reduced his salary, he must call the author of his distress to an account, for that it would be easier to him to lose his life than to starve The affrighted Cibber told him he should receive an answer from him on Saturday next Bickerstaffe found that day his usual income was continued”

With one of his sarcastic rebukes we have more sympathy, as when the younger Mills was once rehearsing Scandal, in “Love for Love,” Mills, when Scandal broke out into the exclamation of “Death and hell! where is Valentine?” observed that poor Mr Booth forgot the “Death and hell,” etc. Cibber, with a contemptuous smile, told him there was more beauty in his forgetfulness than in all he remembered

Wilks and Booth were truly honest, open, and manly characters, and were heartily esteemed by their comrades When Harper pleaded with Booth for increase of salary, urging that Shepherd had twenty shillings a week more, Booth asked carelessly would he like Shepherd’s reduced to his? The other vehemently protested against this, and on pay-day found his salary raised.

Here is a little sketch of green-room life, drawn in an agreeably cosy way by Tom Davies. He says:

There is a little open room in Drury Lane Theatre, called the “settle,” it is separated from the stage and the scene-room by a wainscot enclosure It was formerly, before the great green-room was built, a place for many of the actors to retire to, between the acts, during the time of action and rehearsal From time out of mind, till about the year 1740, to this place a pretty large number of comedians used to resort constantly after dinner, which, at that time, was generally over at two o’clock Here they talked over the news and politics of the day, though, indeed, they were no great politicians, for players are generally king’s men Here they cracked their jokes, indulged in little sallies of pleasantry, and

laughed in good humour at their mutual follies and adventures Kings, footmen, aldermen, cardinals, cobblers, princes, judges, link-boys, and fine gentlemen—in short, all characters were mingled together, and from this chaos of confusion arose a harmony of mirth which contributed not a little to reconcile them to their various situations in the theatre Wilks came amongst them sometimes, Booth, who loved the bagatelle, oftener—he liked to converse with them freely, and hear their jokes and remarks on each other, and if from any accidental story or information these good men—I mean Wilks and Booth—could make any individual happy, they laid hold of the offered opportunity. Cibber seldom came among the “settlers”—tyrants fear, as they know they are feared

A curious trio certainly—Booth fond of drink and revelry, Dogget a miser, Cibber a gamester and follower of other vices. Of nights, when he had lost everything at hazard, he would arise and cry out, “Now I must go home and eat a child!” When he reached the playhouse after some such unlucky run, he was scarcely prepared with his part But, humming an opera tune, he would walk on the stage very carelessly and deficient in his part, but dexterously supplied the deficiency of his memory by prolonging his ceremonious bow to the lady and drawling out, “Your humble servant, madam,” to an extraordinary length, then, taking a pinch of snuff and strutting deliberately across the stage, he as gravely asked the prompter, “What is next?” Yet to the author of such admirable comedies and true characters, and which were successfully opposed to the attractions of Congreve, much indulgence should be given.

New plays were now in vogue, such as “The Spartan Dame” “This was inimitably acted in 1719 Mr. Booth, Mr Wilks, Mr. Cibber, Mr. Mills, sen., Mr Southern, Mrs. Oldfield, and Mrs Porter, all performed in it in their height of reputation and the full vigour of their powers. Mr.

Southern acknowledged that he received from the bookseller, as a price for this play, 150*l.*, which at that time was very extraordinary ”

Certain difficulties in the administration were imputed to the peculiar jealous temper of Wilks, who was, it is declared, very grasping and sensitive to a degree. He was ever “sore” as to his position in the company, and greedy of all the good characters. According to one authority, everyone seems to have tried to soothe him and to give way to him, as in a private family the most querulous and contentious is best served. Much allowance must be made for the jaundiced view of Cibber, who, affecting to be impartial, reports all that he can to his discredit. Everyone else bears the handsomest testimony to his honest unselfish character, and what the other interpreted for jealous greed was no more than an honest ardour for his profession. However this may have been, the proceedings and even harmless contentions of the three managers supply us with the most entertaining scenes in green-room life. Little bickerings and discussions, together with the sketches of the general government of a great theatre by three capable men, will afford us some highly interesting sketches

One of these scenes, when Mr Wilks had to be “humoured,” is thus graphically related by Cibber himself.

His own regards for himself, therefore, were to avoid a disagreeable dispute with him, too often complied with. So great was his impatience to be employed, that I scarce remember, in twenty years, above one profitable play we could get to be revived wherein he found he was to make no considerable figure

This “laudable appetite” for fame in Wilks was not, however, to be fed without constant labour.

Wilks therefore plainly discovered by his restless behaviour (though he did not care to speak out) that he thought he had a right to some higher consideration for his performance this was often Booth's opinion as well as my own. It must be further observed, that he actually had a separate allowance of 50*l.* a year for writing our daily play-bills for the printer. But, to speak a plainer truth, this pension, which was no part of our original agreement, was merely paid to keep him quiet, and not that we thought it due to so insignificant a charge as what a prompter had formerly executed. This being really the case, his frequent complaints of being a drudge to the company grew something more than disagreeable to us. For we could not digest the imposition of a man's setting himself to work and then bringing in his own bill for it. Booth, therefore, proposed to me that we might remove this pretended grievance by reviving some play that might be likely to live, and be easily acted, without Wilks having any part in it. About this time an unexpected occasion offered itself to put our project in practice

In 1725, we were called upon, in a manner that could not be resisted, to revive "The Provoked Wife," a comedy which, while we found our account in keeping the stage clear of those loose liberties it had formerly too justly been charged with, we had laid aside for some years. The play being refitted for the stage, was, as I have observed, called for from Court and by many of the nobility. Now, then, we thought was a proper time to come to an explanation with Wilks. accordingly, when the actors were summoned to hear the play read and receive their parts, I addressed myself to Wilks before them all, and told him that as the part of Constant, which he seemed to choose, was a character of less action than he generally appeared in, we thought this might be a good occasion to ease himself by giving it to another. (Here he looked grave.) That the love scenes of it were rather serious than gay or humorous, and therefore might sit very well upon Booth. (Down dropped his brow, and furled were his features) That if we were never to revive a tolerable play without him, what would become of us in case of his indisposition? (Here he pretended to stir the fire) Now the pill began to gripe him. In a word, this provoking civility plunged

him into a passion which he was no longer able to contain; out it came, with all the equipage of unlimited language that on such occasions his displeasure usually set out with, but when this reply was stripped of these ornaments it was plainly this · that he looked upon all I had said as a concerted design, not only to signalise ourselves by laying him aside, but a contrivance to draw him into the disfavour of the nobility To which I answered with some warmth that he was mistaken in our ends “For those, sir,” said I, “you have answered already, by showing the company you cannot bear to be left out of any play Are not you every day complaining of your being over-laboured? And now, upon our first offering to ease you, you fly into a passion, and pretend to make that a greater grievance than the other, but, sir, if your being in or out of the play is a hardship, you shall impose it upon yourself the part is in your hand, and to us it is a matter of indifference now whether you take it or leave it” Upon this he threw down the part upon the table, crossed his arms, and sate knocking his heel upon the floor, as seeming to threaten most when he said least; but when nobody persuaded him to take it up again, Booth, not choosing to push the matter too far, but rather to split the difference of our dispute, said that for his part he saw no such great matter in acting every day, for he believed it the wholesomest exercise in the world. it kept the spirits in motion, and always gave him a good stomach. Though this was, in a manner, giving up the part to Wilks, yet it did not allow he did us any favour in receiving it. Here I observed Mrs. Oldfield began to titter behind her fan, but Wilks, being more intent upon what Booth had said, replied “Everyone could best feel for himself, but he did not pretend to the strength of a pack-horse; therefore, if Mrs. Oldfield would choose anybody else to play with her, he should be very glad to be excused. This throwing the negative upon Mrs. Oldfield was, indeed, a sure way to save himself; which I could not help taking notice of, by saying “It was making but an ill compliment to the company to suppose there was but one man in it fit to play an ordinary part with her.” Here Mrs. Oldfield got up, and turning to me half round to come forward, said with her usual frankness: “Pooh! you are all a parcel of fools to make such a rout about

nothing!" Rightly judging that the person most out of humour would not be the more displeased at her calling us all by the same name As she knew, too, the best way of ending the debate would be to help the weak, she said she hoped Mr Wilks would not so far mind what had passed as to refuse his acting the part with her, for though it might not be so good as he had been used to, yet she believed those who bespoke the play would expect to have it done to the best advantage, and it would make but an odd story abroad if it were known there had been any difficulty in that point among ourselves To conclude, Wilks had the part, and we had all we wanted

There came to London about this time, viz. in 1720, an amiable and much respected man called Benjamin Victor, who was greatly struck by the admirable, sensible reforms and mode of direction adopted by the new managers. This pleasant man arrived from the Dublin Theatre to take a part in Drury Lane

At my arrival in England (he says), my summer retreat was to the delightful solitude of Wolsey, where all the rural pleasures are to be enjoyed in the utmost perfection by the man who carries there a contented mind; but that blessing (for the first time in my life) was then denied me. At this time Booth, Cibber, and Wilks were in the first class, and Mills, Williams, young Wilks, Walker, and young Mills, in the second. The comedians were Johnson, Pinkethman, Norris, Miller, Harper, Lee, and Griffin, the women, Oldfield, Porter, Saunders, Bicknall, Younger, Booth, and Horton. I believe I could mention a comedy in which most of these celebrated people performed in one night But the first instance of their judgment appeared in their regular and masterly manner of governing their rehearsals, over which one of the three managers presided weekly If a new play was coming on, the first three readings fell to the share of the author, if a revived play, it fell to the share of that manager who was the principal performer in it. The readings over,

there followed a limited number of rehearsals, with their parts in their hands, after which, a distant morning was appointed for every person in the play to appear perfect, because the rehearsals only then begin to be of use to the actor, when he is quite perfect in the words and cues, he can then be instructed, and practise his proper entrances, emphasis, attitudes, and exits. Thus the rehearsals went on, under the eye of a person who had ability to instruct and power to encourage and advance those of industry and merit, and to forfeit and discharge the negligent and worthless.

And, indeed, it may be conceived what a serious business the administration of the theatre must have been, as we find Cibber urged, when pleading before the Court of Chancery, that

By the books it is apparent that the managers have under their care no less than one hundred and forty persons in constant daily pay, and among such numbers it will be no wonder if a great many of them are unskilful, idle, and sometimes untractable, all which tempers are to be led, or driven, watched, and restrained by the continual skill, care, and patience of the managers. Every manager is obliged, in his turn, to attend two or three hours every morning at the rehearsal of plays and other entertainments for the stage, or else every rehearsal would be but a rude meeting of mirth and jollity. The same attendance is as necessary at every play during the time of its public action, in which one or more of us have constantly been punctual, whether we have had any part in the play then acted or not. A manager ought to be at the reading of every new play when it is first offered to the stage. Besides this, a manager is to order all new cloaths, to assist in the fancy and propriety of them, to limit the expence, and to withstand the unreasonable importunities of some that are apt to think themselves injured if they are not finer than their fellows. A manager is to direct and oversee the painters, machinists, musicians, singers, and dancers, to have an eye upon the doorkeepers, under-servants, and officers, that, without such care, are too often apt to defraud us or neglect their duty.

This was a fair plea for earning the daily honorarium of 1*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.*, and the parties who avoided such duties could not grudge it.

Even the boxkeepers came to share in these flourishing profits. When, later, Davies tells us, the playhouse, by order of the Lord Chamberlain, was shut up for some time and Cibber arrested, the damages were laid at 10,000*l.* "Of this misfortune Booth and Wilks were talking very seriously at the playhouse in the presence of a Mr King, the box-keeper, who asked if he could be of any service by offering to bail Cibber. 'Why, you blockhead,' says Wilks, 'it is for 10,000*l.*' 'I should be very sorry,' said the box-keeper, 'if I could not be answerable for twice that sum.' The managers stared at each other, and Booth said, with some emotion, to Wilks 'What have you and I been doing, Bob, all this time? A boxkeeper can buy us both.'"

One of this King's predecessors was Joe Ash, who was complimented by the Duke of Buckingham in a curious fashion. "In a letter to Lord Berkley, Buckingham desired him to tell a certain lady that he had resolved to swear by no other than Joe Ash; 'and if that,' said his grace, 'be a sin, it is as odd an one as ever she heard of.' How this man could merit this distinction I know not, unless he lent the duke money to supply his necessities, which were often very urgent."

There had now joined the undertaking, through his father's patronage, a young man of strange character, who was to "hang loose on the theatre" all his life—one of those contentious, malevolent creatures that are ever in confusion and warfare. He was born in a storm—that violent and most destructive one of November 26th, 1703—and, strange to say, was to die in one. A candid observer describes him thus: "His person was far from pleasing; *the features of his face were rather disgusting.* His voice had the same shrill treble,

but without that musical harmony, which Mr Colley Cibber was master of. Yet still an apparent good understanding and quickness of parts, a perfect knowledge of what he ought to represent, together with a vivacity in his manner and a kind of effrontery which was well adapted to the characters he was to represent, pretty amply counterbalanced those deficiencies."

Wherever he was introduced he seemed to bring confusion. However, he was here setting out in life, and had not yet shown his nature. This was Theo Cibber, who tells us how a pageant was introduced in "Henry the Eighth," together with a pompous representation of the coronation of Anna Bullen, etc., in which Mr Booth performed the part of the King above twenty nights successively. "This reminds me," he says, "of a circumstance of theatrical policy, which I will venture to relate" This device seems to support Cibber *père's* view of Mr. Wilks's jealous ardour.

Mr Booth, finding himself fatigued with playing the part of King Henry, began to wish for some respite, though, till the illness he was but lately recovered from, he frequently acted in a new (or revived) play a capital laborious part many successive nights, with great spirit, etc., without wanting a relaxation, or having recourse to the modern manner of puffing an indisposition of a principal performer in the bills, to the interruption of the run of the piece, or making a previous bargain with the managers, to appear but a certain number of nights in one week. Booth having wished him to secure Wilks's aid, without its seeming to be a proposal of Mr. Booth's, I took the hint, and pursued the following method. The Saturday morning I waited on the managers at their office, where they constantly settled their weekly expenses (and as constantly paid them) and fixed the business of the ensuing week. At these meetings also they settled the order in which new or revived plays or entertainments should be brought forward, heard the (frequent imaginary) grievances of the company, and gave rewards to, or advanced the salaries of

such performers as, *on any emergency*, had been of particular service, or had given proofs of their improvement in their business, which last articles, *I remember, had never passed unnoticed by them* I took occasion to hint to Mr. Wilks that the company of the other house, as I had been informed, were busied in privately getting up the play of "Anna Bullen," and proposed to add the coronation to it. In this play I knew Mr. Wilks had the favourite part of Piercy, and indeed never failed to draw tears from his auditors, though the play (a well-planned piece, but poorly wrote) had seldom drawn any extraordinary audiences Mr. Booth immediately backed my proposal of forestalling the performance at the other house by directly getting up the play, and introducing Queen Anna's coronation as no improper addition to it Fame was Mr Wilks's darling passion. I did not forget to hint how much I had heard many people wish to see Mr. Wilks in the part of Piercy, and that Mis. Oldfield's performances in the part of Anna Bullen, with the intended addition, would probably give the play a very great run Mr. Wilks swallowed the bait, and the play was immediately ordered into rehearsal. But Mr Booth's business was but half done, for though Banks's Henry VIII required not the force nor all the attention due to Shakespeare's, and, as Mr Booth said, the former was a part he could play with, in comparison of the latter, yet he had a step further to take, which was to bring Wilks to consent the coronation should be added to other plays as a detached entertainment To bring this about my friend Barton again applied to me. I told him I believed we should find no great difficulty in it

At our next meeting I informed the managers that I was led into the mistake of "Anna Bullen's" being revived at the other house by seeing the part of Piercy in the hands of one of their actors (which I really had) and by having intimation given me that several properties—as coronets, scepters, armour, etc etc—were making for the use of that stage, which I now was convinced they intended for the decoration of a mock coronation, to be added to all their plays. I therefore submitted it to their better judgment, whether it would not be advisable to perform ours as before hinted, and tack it to plays, which of themselves, either through

repetition or other accidents, had not latteily caused an overrun; yet a variety of them would probably keep up the audiences to the coronation, when its own force might be somewhat spent, and as that representation had cost them near a thousand pounds, it would be a pity to drop it at this critical juncture, since by this means it might bring them several more crowded houses at advanced prices (which, by-the-way, are now the common prices). I addressed myself chiefly to Master Wilks, who said, for his part, he was indifferent, but bid me ask my father's opinion (who at this juncture was absent) I replied, I had not indeed mentioned it to him; but I was sure whatever he (Mr Wilks) thought proper, Mr Cibber would readily come into. "As for my part," said Booth, "I don't think Theo's thought amiss" Wilks added (to my no small satisfaction) 'twas his opinion the younker's thought might prove a very lucky one, that they might do as they would, for he left it to them What swayed him, I knew, was his playing many parts to large audiences rather than indifferent ones (a natural and not culpable vanity). On this concession of his I immediately added the Ceremony of the Champion to the Coronation, and it was continued to a great number of plays

A large number of the bills, dockets, etc, connected with the Cibber, Wilks, and Dogget management are preserved in the British Museum. They help to illustrate the state of things behind the scenes. One bill ran

For silk to face the sleaves, 1s 8d For "Jane Shore" For making a manto and a flounced petticoat, 18s , for binding, bone buttons, and luples, 3s. Mrs Willis, jun , 4l 13s. 4d For emptying dust-hold, 1s , mending a gold braslet, 5d.; cotton for lamps, 1s 8d , sand, whiting, brick-dust, 1d

January, 171 $\frac{3}{4}$ —For 4 supernumerary hands in the violines (by order of Mr Wilks), at 5 shillings, 4 nights, 4l. (four pounds)—R. Booth, C. Cibber, R. Wilks. Tuning the harpsi-cord—B C. and W

January 27, 1713.—For Mr. Cox, for "The Libertin" For making a flounced manto, lined with scarlet, 5s , for stiffe for a false taile, 2s 6d., for silk for face, etc.

In 1714 we find

September 22nd — Soldiers, 18s. 6d , 1l 14s (From October to April this item cost nearly 50l) Ye double boxes, which were kept for the Prince and Princess, and their attendants, will hold twenty people; at single prices make 4l a night, twenty more nights, at 4l. per night, makes 166l , and extraordinary charges, soldiers, etc , 49l 11s , total 168l. 11s There were also the books of plays at 3s

Soldiers were always placed at the corner of the stage, underneath the royal box, on the occasion of the royal visits, which appeared to have been continued for many nights. The following bills for scenery and other expenses, each signed by the three managers, are curious :

Tuning the harpsicord, 5s. Painter's bill · For painting Appollo's chariot in gold, four horses, a glory, a bench of rushes, a sea, and Dafne turned to a tree, 7l (The managers gave him 6l) The timber, boards, screwes, etc , small nayles to nayle the cloth on For the brass enstrooment that Apollo carys in his hand, four carpindes woik, 3l Dew to the scavingeis at Christmas last past, one quarter, 1l 7s 6d ., dew to the watch, detto, 7s. 6d. The property bill for Saturday, February 4th.— In "What d'ye call It " Paid for ye hire of a couple of houndes from Knightsbridge, 4s ; for a paper of vermilion used on the stage, 2d In "Oronooko," for blood, 2d , and 8 ounces of pomatum for Mr. Booth and Mr Mills, 1s. The following night there was required A sham child, dressed, at 5s ; the use of a surgeon's box, 6d. In the relapse · Two great looking-glasses cost 2s ; a sedan, 1s ; an ice cake, 2d ., for oranges and aples for Mr. Bicknall, 6d , the use of a cobbler's bench and tools, 6d , and making 12 whiskers of hair, 2s ; due for a ring lost by Mr. Powil, 7s 6d Copying parts ranged from 3d. to 2s.

1715 —3 dances, 24 sheets, at 1s per sheet, 1l 4s.

A notable feature of this period was the admirable criticism in the public papers. That best-abused man, Cibber, has

admirably sketched the *bonhomie* and honest virtues of Steele, whose unflagging kindness to actors and interest in the stage was shown in many serviceable ways. Some time before he became connected with the theatre he had displayed this feeling, and no one can read "The Tatler" without noting the good-nature with which he would give the aid of his pen to the player. Cibber, long after, in his dedication to his play of "Ximenes," says "How often have we known most excellent audiences drawn together at a day's warning by the influence or warrant of a single 'Tatler,' in a season when our best endeavours without it could not defray the charge of the performance. This powerful and innocent fashion soon recovered us into fashion." He then proceeds with a long and generous encomium of one whom he knew so well as a friend and partner. Nothing more pleasing or more ingenious can be conceived than the little sketches with which he would introduce an appeal to patronise the benefit of a living player, or touch the merits of one just deceased.

Nor was this aid given without a certain independence and freedom of advice, as on another occasion, when he "was informed that Mr. Mills, the player, desired to be admitted. He was so, and with much modesty acquainted me, as he did other people of note, that 'Hamlet' was to be acted on Wednesday next for his benefit. I had long wanted to speak with this person, because I thought I could admonish him of many things which would tend to his improvement. In the general I observed to him, that, though action was his business, the way to that action was not to study gesture, for the behaviour would follow the sentiments of the mind. Action to the player is what speech is to an orator. If the matter be well conceived, words will flow with ease, and if the actor is well possessed of the nature of his part, a proper action will necessarily follow. He informed me that Wilks

was to act Hamlet I desired him to request of him in my name that he would wholly forget Mr Betterton, for that he failed in no part of Othello but where he had him in view. An actor's forming himself by the carriage of another is like the trick among the widows, who lament their husbands as their neighbours did theirs, and not according to their own sentiments of the deceased ”

On another occasion Steele says he heard his “old friend Mr. Hart speak of an observation among the players that it is impossible to act with grace except the actor has forgot that he is before an audience Till he has arrived at that, his motion, his air, his every step and gesture has something in them which discovers he is under a restraint for fear of being ill-received, or if he considers himself as in the presence of those who approve his behaviour, you see an affectation of that pleasure run through his whole carriage ”

His criticisms, too, on the merits of different actors have nice accurate touches, as when comparing Wilks and Cibber. “Perfect actors in their different kinds,” he points out that “Wilks has a singular talent in representing the graces of nature, Cibber the deformity in the affectation of them. This is seen in the unmistakable strain and run of good humour which is kept up in the character of Wildair, and for the nice and delicate abuse of understanding in that of his Novelty. Cibber, in another light, hits exquisitely the flat civility of an affected gentleman usher, and Wilks the easy frankness of a gentleman.” It may be ventured that this passage in itself is a lesson on acting, but these and other fine distinctions laid down by Elia and critics of the first rank require for material plays written with opportunity for their distinction. The editor would show corresponding severity to a lower style of art “which he, no doubt, considered fell within the province of mere buffoonery. I shall conclude this paper

with a note I have just received from the two ingenious friends, Mr. Penkethman and Mr. Bullock ”

SIR,—Finding by your paper, No 182, that you are drawing parallels between the greatest actors of the age, as you have already begun with Mr Wilks and Mr Cibber, we desire you would do the same justice to your humble servants, William Bullock and William Penkethman

For the information of posterity I shall comply with this letter and set these two great men in such a light as Sallust has placed his Cato and Cæsar Mr William Bullock and Mr. William Penkethman are of the same age, profession, and sex They both distinguish themselves in a very particular manner under the discipline of the crab-tree, with this only difference, that Mr Bullock has the most agreeable squall, and Mr Penkethman the more graceful shrug Penkethman devours a cold chick with great applause Bullock’s talent lies chiefly in sparagras Penkethman is very dexterous at conveying himself under a table, Bullock is no less active at jumping over a stick Mr Penkethman has a great deal of money, but Mr Bullock is the taller man

This suggests certain oddities of the stage, as when we find reputations handed down from this very time, founded on speaking a few lines correctly. There was one Peer who was celebrated for saying three lines “For us and for our tragedy,” etc And yet it must be owned that the spirit in which he was appreciated showed a fine instinct in his audiences. For the criticism ran that Peer spoke it with such an air as represented that *he was imitating an actor*, so that the others on the stage really appeared to be real personages, and not representatives in comparison with him. “This was a nicety,” says his biographer, “that none but the most subtle actor could have concealed”

One of the most agreeable sketches from Steele’s hand is

his lament over this very actor, given in a portrait as quaint as it is graphic. Thus he presents Peer, who died in June

This gave me so much concern for the death of Mr. William Peer, of the Theatre Royal, who was an actor at the Restoration, and took his theatrical degree with Betterton, Kynaston, and Harris. Though his station was humble he performed it well. Mr. William Peer distinguished himself particularly in two characters, which no man ever could touch but himself; one of them was the speaker of the prologue of the play, which is contrived in the tragedy of "Hamlet" to awake the consciences of the guilty princes. Mr. William Peer spoke that preface to the play with such an air as represented that he was an actor, and with such an inferior manner as only acting an actor, as made the others on the stage appear real great persons and not representatives. This was a nicety in acting that none but the most subtle player could so much as conceive. I remember his speaking these words, in which there is no great matter but in the right adjustment of the air of the speaker, with universal applause

For us and for our tragedy,  
Here stooping to your clemency,  
We beg your hearing patiently

Hamlet says very archly upon the pronouncing of it, "Is this a prologue or a posy of a ring?" However, the speaking of it got Mr. Peer more reputation than those who speak the length of a Puritan's sermon every night will ever attain to. Besides this, Mr. Peer got a great fame on another little occasion. He played the Apothecary in "Carus Marius," as it is called by Otway, but "Romeo and Juliet," as originally in Shakespear, it will be necessary to recite more out of the play than he spoke, to have a right conception of what Peer did in it. Marius, weary of life, recollects means to be rid of it after this manner

I do remember an apothecary, etc.

Without quotation the reader could not have a just idea of the visage and manner which Peer assumed, when in the

most lamentable tone imaginable he consents, and delivering the poison like a man reduced to the drinking it himself, if he did not vend it, says to Marius

My poverty, but not my will, consents,  
Take this and drink it off, the work is done

It was an odd excellence and a very particular circumstance this of Peer's, that his whole action of life depended upon speaking five lines better than any man else in the world. But this eminence lying in so narrow a compass, the governors of the theatre observing his talents to lie in a certain knowledge of propriety, and his person admitting him to shine only in the two above parts, his sphere of action was enlarged by the addition of the post of property-man. This officer has always ready, in a place appointed for him behind the prompter, all such tools and implements as are necessary in the play, and it is his business never to want billets-doux, poison, false money, thunderbolts, daggers, scrolls of parchment, wine, pomatum, truncheons, and wooden legs, ready at the call of the said prompter, according as his respective utensils were necessary for promoting what was to pass on the stage. The addition of this officer, so important to the conduct of the whole affair of the stage, and the good economy observed by their present managers in punctual payments, made Mr. Peer's subsistence very comfortable. But it frequently happens that men lose their virtue in prosperity who were shining characters in the contrary condition. Good fortune indeed had no effect on the mind, but very much on the body of Mr. Peer, for in the seventieth year of his age he grew fat, which rendered his figure unfit for the utterance of the five lines above mentioned.

We learn that "one night a sentinel, who stood on the stage to prevent the disorders which the most unmannerly race of young men that ever were seen in any age frequently raise in public assemblies, upon Piercy's beseeching to be heard, burst into tears, upon which the greatest part of the audience fell into a loud and ignorant laughter, which others, who were

touched with the liberal compassion in the poor fellow, could hardly suppress by their clapping But the man, without the least confusion or shame in his countenance for what had happened, wiped away the tears, and was still intent upon the play. The distress still rising, the soldier was so much moved that he was obliged to turn his face from the audience, to their no small merriment Piercy had the gallantry to take notice of his honest heart, and, as I am told, gave him a crown to help him in his affliction ”

A more singular or at least tragic occurrence was what occurred in connection with the production of “The Siege of Damascus,” a play of much poetical and pathetic interest, though by a comparatively obscure writer, named Hughes, but who was held in much esteem and respect There is a tender strain through the piece which is pleasing and genuine, and an effective passage in it on Death was afterwards recalled as strangely significant A prisoner is told to think of death, and thus reflects

Farewell and think of death ! Was it not so ?  
 What art thou, O thou great mysterious term ?  
 The way to thee we know—diseases, famine,  
 Sword, fire, and all thy ever-open gates,  
 But what’s behind them ? Who will draw the veil ?  
 Yet death’s not there. No, ’tis a point of time ;  
 The verge ’twixt mortal and immortal being.  
 It mocks our thought. On this side all is life,  
 And when we have reached death, in that very instant  
 ’Tis past the thinking of

Within a few hours of its successful production—February 17th, 1719—and of the recital of these lines, the author expired, making one of the earliest of those strange endings that are associated with the stage.

That air of romance which seems to accompany the per-

sonages of the stage seems to be particularly associated with the female dramatists. Of these Mrs Behn, Mrs. Cowley, and Mrs. Inchbald offer instances. Mrs Aphra Behn's wanderings abroad we have followed, but the sparkling authoress of "The Wonder" (Susanna Centlivre) began her life with a little incident that might have figured in a Spanish comedy of intrigue.

She was the daughter of Mr Freeman, of Holbeach, in Lincolnshire, who, being a dissenter and a zealous Parliamentarian, was at the Restoration much persecuted, so that his estate was confiscated and he himself compelled to fly to Ireland. His daughter, the dramatist, is supposed to have been born about 1680. Whincop tells us that, after her father's death, finding herself very ill-treated by her stepmother, she determined, though almost destitute of money and every other necessary, to go up to London that as she was proceeding on her journey, on foot, she was met by a young gentleman from the University of Cambridge (the afterwards well-known Anthony Hammond, Esq.), who was so extremely struck with her youth and beauty, and so affected with her distress, that he fell instantly in love with her, and prevailed on her to go with him to Cambridge, where, equipping her in boy's clothes, he introduced her to his intimates at college as a relation, who was come down to see the university, and that this continued for some months, till at length, perhaps afraid that the affair would be discovered at the university, he persuaded her to go to London, providing her, however, with a considerable sum of money and a letter of recommendation to a gentlewoman of his acquaintance in town. This, if true, must have happened when she was extremely young, it being certain that she was married, in her sixteenth year, to a nephew of Sir Stephen Fox. But that gentleman dying within a twelvemonth, her wit and beauty soon procured her a second husband, whose name was Carroll, and who was an officer in the army; but he having the misfortune to be killed in a duel within about a year and a half after their marriage, she became a second time a widow. This loss was a severe affliction to her, as she appears

to have sincerely loved that gentleman Partly, perhaps, to divert her melancholy, but chiefly, it is probable, for the means of support, she now applied to her pen, and it is under this name of Carroll that some of her earlier pieces were published. Her first attempt was in tragedy Her natural vivacity led her afterwards more to comedy, and some eighteen dramatic pieces, which she afterwards wrote She even became herself a performer, though it is probable of no great merit, as she never rose above the station of a country actress. However, she was not long in this way of life, for, in 1706, performing the part of Alexander the Great, in Lee's "Rival Queens," at Windsor, where the Court then was, she wounded the heart of one Mr Joseph Centlivre, yeoman of the mouth, or, in other words, principal cook to Her Majesty, who married her.

In connection with this lady's plays we may turn to an admirable guide, whose comments are so just that they at once help us to appreciate the changes in dramatic tastes Hazlitt says "She was almost the last of our writers who ventured to hold out in the prohibited track. Her plays have a provoking spirit and volatile salt in them, which still preserves them from decay. Congreve is said to have been jealous of their success at the time, and that it was one cause which drove him in disgust from the stage. If so, it was without any good reason for these plays have great and intrinsic merit in them, which entitled them to their popularity (and it is only spurious and undeserved popularity which should excite a feeling of jealousy in any well-regulated mind), and besides, their merit was of a kind entirely different from his own. 'The Wonder' and 'The Busy Body' are properly comedies of intrigue"

Then follows this admirable spirited sketch of her best-known play, and which almost takes us *en scène* "'The Wonder' is one of the best of our acting plays. The passion of jealousy in Don Felix is managed in such a way as to give

as little offence as possible to the audience, for every appearance combines to excite and confirm his worst suspicions, while we, who are in the secret, laugh at his groundless uneasiness and apprehensions. The ambiguity of the heroine's situation, which is like a continued practical *équivoque*, gives rise to a quick succession of causeless alarms, subtle excuses, and the most hairbreadth 'scapes. The scene near the end, in which Don Felix, pretending to be drunk, forces his way out of Don Manuel's house, who wants to keep him a prisoner by producing his marriage contract in the shape of a pocket-pistol, with the terrors and confusion into which the old gentleman is thrown by this sort of *argumentum ad hominem*, is one of the richest treats the stage affords, and calls forth incessant peals of laughter and applause. Besides the two principal characters (Violante and Don Felix), Lissardo and Flippanta come in very well to carry on the underplot, and the airs and graces of an amorous waiting-maid and conceited man-servant, each copying after their master and mistress, were never hit off with more natural volubility or affected nonchalance than in this enviable couple. Lissardo's playing off the diamond ring before the eyes of his mortified Dulcinea, and aping his master's absent manner while repeating 'Roast me these Violantes,' as well as the jealous quarrel of the two waiting-maids, which threatens to end in some very extraordinary discoveries, are among the most amusing traits in this comedy."

It was under the management of Wilks, Cibber, and Booth, in 1714, that "The Wonder" was brought forward, and the author, in her preface, praises the performance of Mr Wilks and Mrs Oldfield, in the characters of Don Felix and Violante, especially in the last act, where she says, if Nature herself were to paint a love-quarrel, she could only copy them. Yet the difficulties under which she had to get her play of "The Busy Body" accepted were serious, both

from a hostile manager and actors. We are told by Baker “that Mr Congreve’s ‘Way of the World,’ which perhaps contains more true intrinsic wit than any dramatic piece ever written, could scarcely make its way at all. Nay, we have been confidently assured, that the very same great actor we mentioned just now made use of this remarkable expression with regard to her ‘Bold Stroke for a Wife,’ viz ‘that not only her play would be damned, but she herself be damned for writing it’ Yet we find it still standing on the list of acting plays, nor is it ever performed without meeting with the approbation of the audience, as do also her ‘Busy Body’ and ‘Wonder.’” Nor was this all. “The Busy Body,” which lately so effectually revived and amused the town, was got ready for production under very many forebodings “At rehearsal, Mr Wilks had so mean an opinion of his part (Sir George Airy), that one morning in a passion he threw it off the stage into the pit, and swore that nobody would sit to hear such stuff The frightened poetess begged him with tears to take it up again, which he did mutteringly; and about the latter end of April the play was acted for the first time, but those who had heard of it were told it was a silly thing written by a woman, that the players had no opinion of it, etc, and on the first day there was a very poor house, scarcely charges Under these circumstances it cannot be supposed that the play appeared to much advantage, the audience only came there for want of another place to go to. They were yawning at the beginning of it, but were agreeably surprised, more and more, every act, till at last the house rung with as much applause as was possible to be given by so thin an audience The next day there was a better house, and the third crowded for the benefit of the author, and so it continued till the thirteenth” Never had a lady authoress such difficulties to contend with.

And the same judicious observer, Baker, adds.

It must be allowed that her plays do not abound with wit, and that the language of them is sometimes even poor, enervate, incorrect, and puerile ; but then her plots are busy and well conducted, and her characters in general natural and well marked. But as plot and character are undoubtedly the body and soul of comedy, and language and wit, at best, but the clothing and external ornament, it is certainly less excusable to show a deficiency in the former than in the latter. And the success of some of Mrs Centlivre's plays plainly evinces that the first will strike the minds of an audience more powerfully.

There is the true test after all—the approbation of the audience.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE PLAYERS OF 1711-20.

THOUGH crushed and silenced, that *rusé* manager, Rich, as we have seen, was not to be disheartened, and had all this while been completing his new theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. It was time, therefore, to think of forming a new company, but in the meantime he found it necessary to apply for leave to employ them. By the weak defence he had always made against the several attacks upon his interest and former government of the theatre, it might be a question, if his house had been ready in the Queen's time, whether he would then have had the spirit to ask, or interest enough to obtain, leave to use it; but in the following reign, as it did not appear he had done anything to forfeit the right of his patent, he prevailed with Mr. Craggs the younger, afterwards Secretary of State, to lay the application before King George the First, who fairly enough removed the suspension and allowed the patentee to resume his rights. Cibber tells us the public were also eager for two playhouses, as well from the common notion that two would always create emulation in the actors "as from the natural ill-will that follows the fortunate or prosperous in any undertaking. Of this low malevolence we had, now and then,

audience of 150*l.* from a disturbance spirited up by obscure people, who never gave any better reason for it than that it was their fancy to support the idle complaint of one rival actress against another in their several pretensions to the chief part in a tragedy”

All this time there will be some wonder as to what became of the two patents of Charles the Second, which old Rich, now near his end, had carried away with him. He had conceived this curious wild scheme of rebuilding the Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre in Portugal Street, which he had secured at a very low rent, and set about the work. But on the death of Queen Anne the Tory influence came to an end, and with the change of monarch he applied to have the suspension removed. Mr. Craggs laid the matter before the King, and “in so effectual a manner, that (as Mr Craggs himself told me) His Majesty was pleased to say upon it, ‘That he remembered, when he had been in England before, in King Charles’s time, there had been two theatres in London, and as the patent seemed to be a lawful grant, he saw no reason why two playhouses might not be continued.’” He must have been an adroit, clever man, equal to any emergency. With great energy he pushed on his new theatre. It was so far forward that at the end of September, 1714, the decoration of the interior was completed, and he invited several of the connoisseurs to what in our day would be called a private view. We learn that, on September 20th, “several of the most eminent painters met at the Theatre Royal, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, to take a survey of the ceiling, the house being through lighted for that purpose. Over the stage is represented Apollo and the Muses. Over the pit a magnificent piece of architecture, where is seen a group of figures leaning over a long gallery, viz Shakespeare, Jonson, etc., from the originals. They seem in conference with Betterton. The artists have given their opinion that it excels anything of

that kind, both as to design and beauty We hear the said theatre will be finished and opened some time next week.” Such sketches of theatrical interiors at remote periods are always interesting, and seem to call up more vividly the stage-life of the time. But by the curious tragic fatality which has so often attended the stage and its personages, Rich was destined not to see the opening A few weeks later, on November 4th, he died, and “was buried from his house adjoining the King’s Theatre, attended by several of those who had resisted his authority when living” About a month later, on December 8th, the new playhouse was to be opened It was said that “some of the gentlemen who have left the service of Drury (to enlist with Rich) are ordered to return to their colours upon pain of not exercising their lungs elsewhere” Among these deserters were Keene, Bullock, Pack, Leigh (son of Tony Leigh), Spiller, C. Bullock, Mrs. Rogers, Mrs Knight, and Mrs Kent. It was inaugurated by the odd and inappropriate spectacle of the manager’s son coming forward to speak an elegiac prologue, “dressed in mourning.”

But, O my poor father, alas he died  
Ere he beheld this house in finished pride.  
He raised the stately pile by slow degrees,  
But with the hopes a curious town to please

Rich had lived at a country place, Cowley, which had belonged to the unfortunate Mrs. Vanbruggen, widow of the murdered Mountfort; and a lady, whom he invited down there, gives a pleasant sketch of the household.

He sent his carriage, and we soon found ourselves at Cowley. Here we were received with the greatest cordiality by the master of the family, and with unfeigned joy by the younger part of it; but with formality and reserve by the lady of the house This lady having been converted to

Methodism, now thought of nothing but praying and accumulating wealth for herself and her spouse

Upon the death of his wife (Miss Bellamy goes on to tell us), Mr. Rich had married this lady. Her name before that event took place was Mrs Stevens. She had formerly been barmaid at Bret's Coffee-house, was afterwards an actress, but had been several years his housekeeper. She was at that time in a very mediocre situation in the theatre. She had been the intimate friend of Miss Nassau, who succeeded Miss Fenton, afterwards Duchess of Bolton, in Gay's *Polly Peachum*. By the further management of Mrs Rich, a match was brought about between a brother of hers, whose name was Wilford, and a sister of that lady's. This was insuring Mr. Wilford a fortune, as Lord Orford was at that time Auditor of the Exchequer, and had numberless places in his gift. Mr. Wilford was accordingly provided for, and was upon a visit with his wife at Cowley when we arrived there.

The late Mr. Lacy, who had, perhaps, the most extraordinary dramatic collection of modern times, was in possession of some of these early Lincoln's Inn Fields bills one for February 27th, 1700, with the royal arms, and another even earlier, July 11th, 1698, "The Maid's Tragedy," with wood-cut border. The same collector had also Rich's account-books for Lincoln's Inn Fields and Covent Garden from 1723 to 1740.

As we have said, the triumphs of acting leave little behind them. The best resource, or the next best, is the recollection of judicious observers. One such was that actor, writer, bookseller, and critic, the husband of the "pretty wife," Tom Davies. His own observations on the actors of his time are clear and intelligent, and he tells us many others that he gleaned from old actors long since deceased. "The principal of these, as well as my memory can recollect, were Mr. John Roberts, Mr. Morgan, commonly called 'Drib Morgan,' Mr. Aston, son of the famous itinerant actor, Tony Aston, and Mr. Nathaniel Clarke. My acquaintance with Mr. Cross, late

prompter of Drury Lane Theatre, has been of service to me, he had known the stage long, and had recorded many facts of the actors in his days, which he occasionally acquainted me with. Some obligations of this kind I owe Mr. Macklin, and more to Mr. Victor." It is extraordinary the number of useful little facts and traditions he brought together, those whom he did not know himself he was enabled to know through others. Some of his sketches are good. One single sentence has a piquancy. "I have heard," he says, "from the best information of some very old persons, who lived in the reign of Charles the Second, that Betterton, as a general actor, was superior to any one comedian of his time" Of Bridgewater, he says.

He was esteemed a general player, and it was with some a doubt whether he acted best or worst in tragedy or comedy; and, though it may seem paradoxical, yet *he certainly was equally well and ill in both*. For example, in the Ventidius of Dryden, in his "All for Love," he was a true portrait of the rough, brave old soldier, in Tamerlane he was solemnly drowsy in speaking, and struttingly insignificant in action. Towards the latter part of his life he was a dealer in coals, and became indolent in his business of the stage. He died about the year 1749. Milward and Delane were then in the zenith of their reputation; they acted heroes and lovers. Milward's person had the advantage of proper height, nor was he ungraceful in his deportment. His countenance was pleasing and expressive, his voice strong and harmonious; but he was frequently misled by his ear, which could not often distinguish noise from passion and ranting from sensibility. Delane's person and voice were well adapted to the parts he generally acted, but his attachment to the bottle prevented his rising to any degree of excellence. His address and manner were easy and polite. He who understood propriety in speaking better than any other actor of the time, was Quin, who, in characters of ~~humour~~ <sup>humour</sup> and dionified folly, of blunt and boisterous

demeanour, of *treacherous art, contemptuous spleen*, and even of *pleasing gravity*" (happily chosen phrases!) "had no equal Ben Johnson excelled greatly in all his namesake's comedies, then frequently acted, he was, of all comedians, *the chonest and the closest observer* of nature. Johnson never seemed to know that he was before an audience, he drew his character as the poet designed it Chapman was much and justly admired in parts of *absurd impudence, of bold impertinence, and pert poppery*, his dry and voluble expression of Touchstone's sarcastic humour has been equalled by nobody but Mr King Neale was a sort of grotesque actor, whose particular talent was suited only to some very peculiar characters, in which he was sure to excel everybody else. Mr. Garrick, when he was under some difficulty how to distribute a part, used to say, "Come, I will give it to Neale, for I am sure he will make more of it than anybody can" Hippisley was a comedian of lively humour and droll pleasantry, which he often pushed to their full extent, but he would generally stop short when on the brink of excess or offence He may be rightly termed a sober Shuter, a late actor of great merit, whose overflow of comic vivacity often degenerated into buffoonery. At his first appearance *he was always received with a loud laugh and a burst of applause* He supported an indifferent comedy of Durfey, now absolutely forgotten, called "The Plotting Sisters," by his incomparable representation of Fumble, a ridiculous old dotard Corbaccio, in Jonson's "Volpone," can neither see nor hear perfectly Hippisley's look told the audience that he was a deaf man, *for his dim eyes seemed to enquire out the words which were spoken to him* Though he was an actor that generally indulged to the full his power of exciting laughter, yet he could, at times, be as chaste in his colouring as a critical audience could wish. In Fluellen, the Welsh Captain, in Shakespeare's "Henry the Fifth," he represented the choleric spirit and *minute oddities* of the honest ancient Briton, without the least mixture of trick or buffoonery Hippisley's Fluellen was the brave officer and gallant soldier, marked with *harmless peculiarities* He was a confined actor, but what he did was generally distinguished with marks of genius His Polonius was such as Shakespeare drew him, a prating, pedantic, busy, obsequious statesman, a

fool with a dash of the knave, for the man that is too ready to comply with the will of others cannot be honest His Dogberry was a good picture of ignorant archness and laughable impertinence Harper was a lusty fat man, with a countenance expressive of much mirth and jollity, his voice was strong and musical. He was a just representative of our country gentlemen, of booby squires and fox-hunters The brutal and jolly ignorance of his Sir Harry Gubbins, in "The Tender Husband," afforded much sport, and the absurd humour, awkward bashfulness, and good-natured obstinacy of Sir Wilful Witwood, in "The Way of the World," were, in Harper, as diverting as any group of spectators could wish. He died in 1742 of a fever on his spirits Mr John Arthur was a very good copier of nature in some particularities of humour His Periwinkle, in "The Bold Stroke," was diverting, and his Don Manuel, in "She Would and She Would Not," critically just He was a most diverting clown in all the pantomimes of Mr Rich. This actor had a head turned to mechanics, and when Paul Whitehead and Carey the surgeon, from some ridiculous pique, were determined to affront the Freemasons by a mock procession of strange figures in a dung-cait, they applied to Arthur for two or three heads of asses and other animals, which he executed to their satisfaction Arthur was a man of understanding and good observation, but the particularity of his humour often led him into whimsical distresses.

Victor was a simple-minded man, and an enthusiast in his business. He had been a barber and wigmaker, but had a taste for letters, and eventually became Laureate to the Irish Court, his duty being to furnish odes performed on birthdays at Dublin Castle. The sarcastic Baker gives this account of him .

When he offered one of his plays to Mr Rich (a man apt to treasure up sarcastic images to assist him in keeping writers for the stage at a distance), poor Ben received the usual laconic answer, "That his piece would not do." The bard, however, desiring to be furnished with more particular

reasons, he said. "Mr, there is too much *horsehair* in your tragedy" Our author then became under-manager at Smock Alley, Dublin At last, after having produced many literary commodities which were chiefly returned upon his hands, he accepted the treasurership of Drury Lane Theatre, a post in which he acquitted himself with the most scrupulous exactness and fidelity This gentleman's singularities (for some he had) were of quite an innocent nature He regarded the proper arrangement of a playhouse as the greatest and most important task proposed to human abilities. He was therefore solemnly and tediously circumstantial in his accounts of entrances and exits P. S and O P., described to an inch the height of every plume, and the length of every train, he had seen upon the stage, and dwelt much on the advantages received by many authors, as well as actors, from his experience and his admonitions He likewise contrived to prolong these his narratives by repeated summonses to attention, such as, "Sir, sir, sir, observe, observe, observe;" and was the most faithful chronologer of a jest, a riot, or any other incident attending the representation of a new play, always beginning his story in nearly the following words. "I remember once, in the year 1735, when I was at the head of a merry party in the pit—" The disgusting pronoun *I* being also too lavishly employed in his "History of the Stage," our late satirist, Mr. Churchill, observed that *Victor ego* should have been its motto Mr Victor died December 3rd, 1778, at an advanced age, and without previous sickness or pain, at his lodgings, in Charles Street, Covent Garden.

This judicious observer also furnishes a few sketches of a second generation of actors that he remembered, and though he has not the finished touch of Cibber, his strokes have an effective breadth. It will be noted that he sees them, as it were, from "the prompter's side," and with a view to his office. He says

Mr Mills was the most useful actor that ever served a theatre. His person was manly, approaching to the

graceful, and his voice a full, deep, melodious tenor, which suited the characters of rage Johnson was a comedian most happily adapted to all the characters he appeared in. He was one of those comedians, who, like the incomparable Noakes, could give life to many comedies that existed only by their extraordinary performances *His steady countenance* never betrayed the least symptom of the joke he was going to give utterance to. *His decent men (never exaggerated by dress or conduct)* made him, at all times, *appear the real man he represented.* [A truly happy criticism, containing dramatic truths] Norris was celebrated for his excellence in the lower life of comedy, he was an actor that seemed to derive a great part of his merit from the oddity of his little formal figure, and his singular, squeaking tone of voice, and to that degree, that his entrance into a coffee-house, and calling to the waiter for a dish of coffee in the soberest mood, would have raised a smile in the face of the gravest man present He retained the name of "Jubilee Dickey to his death" As he lay bedridden some time, quite worn out with age, I remember to have heard from those about him the following odd passage His relations seemed uneasy at his lying so long without help, and would send for a physician, though against his positive order. When the doctor came to his bedside, he asked the patient the usual questions, to which Norris gave no manner of answer, but being pressed very much by the doctor to speak to him, he at last turned his head, and in his usual comic squeaking voice, said "Doctor, pray can you tell how to make an old clock go when the wheels are all worn out?" He died soon after. Miller was a natural, spirited comedian; he was the famous Teague in "The Committee," and all the comedies where that character is introduced, and though the gentlemen of Ireland would never admit that he had the true brogue, yet he substituted something in the room of it that made his Teague very diverting to an English audience, and perhaps more so than if played by an Irishman, for I have often seen that character so extremely well acted in Dublin that I did not understand one word the actor said They said his principal motive for marrying was not for a fortune, but a wife learned

low comedian, and the Falstaff of Drury Lane Theatre, when "Henry the Fourth" (where Booth was Hotspur, Wilks the Prince of Wales, and Cibber, Glendour) never failed to bring crowded audiences, so that Harper was more seen in Falstaff than Quin, though less admired. And yet I remember a leading critic declared for Harper, who said, though he wanted *the masking eye*, and some other *judicious strokes* of Quin, yet he had what Quin at that time wanted, *that jollity and natural propensity to excite laughter* which Shakespeare has apparently given to Falstaff. Spiller was a comedian that had a peculiar excellence from most of his brethren in that class, who almost all retained a sameness, or at least some singularity to be known by, in all characters, though ever so various.

The following, however, is the happy and discriminative criticism of a foreign observer, Riccoboni, on the same actor.

When I was in London, a thing happened, which, for its singularity, deserves notice. At the theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields I saw a comedy taken from "The Crispin Medicine." He who acted the Old Man (Spiller) executed it to the nicest perfection, which one could expect in no player who had not forty years' experience and exercise. As he played the part of an old man, I made no manner of doubt of his being an old comedian, who, instructed by long experience, and at the same time assisted by the weight of years, had performed it so naturally. But how great was my surprise when I learned that he was a young man, about the age of twenty-six! I could not conceive it possible for a young actor, by the help of art, to imitate that debility of nature to such a pitch of exactness, but the wrinkles of his face, his sunk eyes, and his loose and yellow cheeks were incontestable proofs against what they said to me. I knew for certain that the actor, to fit himself for the part of this old man, spent an hour in dressing himself, and disguised his face so nicely, and painted so artificially a part of his eyebrows and eyelids, that, at the distance of six paces, it was impossible not to be deceived. I was desirous to be a witness of this myself, but pride hindered me, so knowing that I must be ashamed, I was satisfied of the confirmation of it from the other actors.

This is a remarkable and piquant tribute to English acting. He was a man of an irregular life, and therefore lived neglected, and after death was soon forgotten.

He next speaks of another singular being, named Boheme, but Tom Davies shall introduce him.

Mr Boheme was, about the year 1718, accidentally seen by Rich, when playing with some itinerants at Stratford-le-Bow, who soon distinguished him from his companions, and hired him, at a small income, to act at his theatre in Lincoln's Inn Fields. I have been told that this actor was, on his first trial, cast into the trifling part of Francisco. His unaffected yet feeling manner of pronouncing this short speech—

For this relief much thanks; 'tis bitter cold,  
And I am sick at heart—

roused the auditors to an attention of his merit. His salary was immediately increased by the manager, and he proved afterwards a great ornament of the stage.

Such of my readers (adds Victor) as have been long enough in life to remember an actor in Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre by the name of Boheme, will thank me for reviving so remarkable a performer in their memories, for the natural, musical, piercing tones of his voice, particularly adapted to grief and distress, must have touched the heart of every feeling auditor too forcibly ever to be forgot. Boheme was bred a sailor, and quitted the quarter-deck for the stage. He was tall and erect, with a manly countenance, but by walking the decks of the ship from a boy he had contracted a straddling in his gait, of which no art or application could ever cure him. After the entertainment was over, my curiosity led me behind the scenes, to enquire after the new agreeable actor. There I was told he was engaged by the manager of Lincoln's Inn Theatre, to be in his company the following season. He appeared there very soon, in capital characters, but that company being so inferior to the powerful Theatre Royal in Drury Lane, they never could see anything like an audience to

nature, and who casually went thither, were surprised and charmed with the musical, pathetic tones of grief that went pointed to the heart from this captivating speaker. He had also a singular vein of humour, and was excellent in some parts of comedy Boheme died of a fever in the prime of his life, and before that theatre was brought into vogue by pantomimes, by which means this very extraordinary actor was not generally known

He thus draws Walker, the original Macheath, whom he had known “Walker knew no more of music than barely singing a song in tune, and, indeed, his singing was supported by his inimitable action, by his speaking to the eye In several parts of tragedy his look, deportment, and acting gave a distinguished glare to tyrannical rage and uncommon force He was the only actor that I remember that could give consequence to such under parts as Worthy and Harcourt in ‘The Country Wife’”—a criticism that points to a world of merit, and has a deeper significance than would be supposed. “His voice was strong and pleasing till he spoiled it by intemperance and the abominable practice of *eating and drinking between the acts of a play*,” probably going round to the adjacent taverns

One performer Chetwood introduces thus pleasantly: “I mention this gentleman as receiving instructions from the late Joseph Ashbury, Esq. Mr Keen was an excellent scholar and a very good actor, but having some share in the government of the theatre in Lincoln’s Inn Fields under Mr Rich, either for the want of performers, or, perhaps, overlooking his talents (a fault sometimes very good actors of both sexes are guilty of), he stood for parts something out of his road, as Oroonoko, Earl of Essex, Edgar in ‘King Lear.’ When in the part of Gloster, in the same play, and others of that cast, no actor of his time could excel him Although a very good figure and voice, his person wanted elegance for the soft characters. It was reported the ill success of the theatre, when he was sharer

in profit and loss, broke his heart. He died in the year 1719, and was buried in the body of the church of St Clements Danes by a voluntary subscription from both houses. It was what we term in England a walking funeral, and there were upwards of two hundred persons in deep mourning. His life was published by Mr. Savage, illegitimate son to the Earl of Rivers. Several would-be-wits wrote copies of verses upon his death. One I remember ending with this line.

"And Death was found too sharp for Keen."

## CHAPTER VII.

### PATENT FOR STEELE.

WITH the death of the Queen terminated the licence of Drury Lane Theatre, and with due adroitness the managers determined to enlist in their cause Sir Richard Steele, who had suffered persecution under the Tories. As they knew the annuity was too good a thing to be left to them, and must be paid to somebody—for Collier's chances were gone with his Tory patrons—they fancied they might use it to secure more enlarged privileges. Sir Richard, ever pleasant and *débonnaire*, heartily and kindly entered into their views, even when they made stipulations limiting his privileges in case other theatres were opened. This amiable man indeed, “while we were offering to proceed, stopped us short by assuring us that, as he came among us by our own invitation, he should always think himself obliged to come into any measures for our ease and service; that to be a burthen to our industry would be more disagreeable to him than it could be to us; and as he had always taken a delight in his endeavours for our prosperity, he should be still ready on our own terms to continue them. Everyone who knew Sir Richard Steele in his prosperity (before the effects of his good-nature had brought him to

distresses), knew that this was his manner of dealing with his friends in business. When later we proposed to put this agreement into writing, he desired us not to hurry ourselves, for that he was advised, upon the late desertion of our actors, to get our licence (which only subsisted during pleasure) enlarged into a more ample and durable authority, and which he said he had reason to think would be more easily obtained if we were willing that a patent for the same purpose might be granted to him only, for his life and three years after, which he would then assign over to us. This was a prospect beyond our hopes, and what we had long wished for." It must be also added, however, that Steele's services in the matter, admitted by Cibber in open court, gave him a serious claim on their gratitude. The patent was "settled" carefully by eminent counsel, and these he had consulted not so much for the security of the thing as from fear it would injure or interfere with Rich's property. These incidents are characteristic of this worthy man.

This privilege was dated October 18th, 1714, and by it "we did give and grant unto Sir Richard Steele, Knt., Mr Robert Wilks, Mr. Colley Cibber, Mr Thomas Dogget, and Mr Barton Booth, full power, licence, and authority to form, constitute, and establish a company of comedians, now acting at the theatre in Drury Lane" Steele was described as "supervisor" of Drury Lane Theatre. The patent followed three months later, and was dated January 19th, 1715. The incidents attending the gift were most gratifying; Parker, in compliment to Sir Richard, declining his fee. As Sir Richard was leaving town in a hurry, he had signed a carelessly drawn document, which, it was found, transferred to him a share in the property as well as the patent. This he took no advantage of.

## STEELE'S PATENT.

George, by the grace of God, etc. We having informed Ourselves, since Our accession to Our crown, of the state of Our theatre, and finding, to Our sorrow, that through the neglect and ill management thereof, the true and only end of its institution is greatly perverted, and instead of exhibiting such representations of human life as may tend to the encouragement and honour of religion and virtue and dis-countenancing vice, the English stage hath been the complaint of the sober, intelligent, and religious part of Our people, and by indecent and immodest expressions, by profane allusions to Holy Scriptures, by abusive and scurrilous representations of the clergy, and by the success and applause bestowed on libertine characters, it hath given great and insufferable scandal to religion and good manners. And in the representations of civil government care has not been taken to create in the minds of Our good subjects just and dutiful ideas of the power and authority of magistrates, as well as to preserve a due sense of the rights of Our people; and, through many other abuses, that which under a wise discretion and due regulation would be useful and honourable has proved, and if not repressed will continue, a reproach to Government and a dishonour to religion. And it being Our pious resolution, which with the blessing of God We will steadily pursue through the whole course of Our reign, not only by Our own example but by all other means possible, to promote the honour of religion and virtue, and on every occasion to encourage good literature and to endeavour the establishment of good manners and discipline among all Our loving subjects in all stations and ranks of men whatsoever, these being, in Our opinion, the proper means to render Our kingdoms happy and flourishing. We, having seriously resolved on the premises, and being well satisfied of the ability and good disposition of Our trusty and well-beloved Richard Steele, Esq., for the promoting these Our royal purposes, not only from his public services to religion and virtue, but his steady adherence to the interest of his country, know ye that We, of Our special grace, certain knowledge, and meer motion, and in consideration of the good and faithful services which the said Sir Richard

Steele hath done Us, and doth intend to do for the future, have given and granted, and by these presents for Us, and for Our heirs and successors, do give and grant unto him, the said Richard Steele, his exors , etc , for and during the term of his natural life, and for and during in full end and term of three years to be computed next and immediately after the decease of him, the said Richard Steele, full power, licence, and authority to gather together, form, entertain, govern, privilege, and keep a company of comedians for Our service, to exercise and act tragedies, plays, operas, and other performance of the stage, within the house in Drury Lane, wherein the same are now exercised by virtue of a licence granted by Us to him, the said Richard Steele, Robert Wilks, Colley Cibber, Thomas Dogget, and Barton Booth, or within any other house built, or to be built, wherever they can best be fitted for the purpose, within Our cities of London and Westminster, or the suburbs thereof. Such house or houses so to be built (if occasion shall require) to be assigned, allotted out by the surveyor of Our works for a theatre or playhouse, with necessary tiring and retiring rooms, and other places convenient, of such extent and dimensions as the said Richard Steele, his executors, administrators, or assigns shall think fitting, wherein tragedies, comedies, plays, operas, musick, scenes, and all other entertainments of the stage whatsoever may be showed and presented. Which said company shall be Our servants, and styled the Royal Company of Comedians, and shall consist of such members as the said Sir Richard Steele, his exors , etc , shall from time to time think meet And We do hereby, for Us, Our heirs, and successors, grant unto the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Richard Steele, his exors , etc , full power, licence, and authority to permit such persons, at and during the pleasure of the s<sup>d</sup> Sir Richard Steele, his exors , etc , from time to time to act plays and entertainments of the stage of all sorts peaceably and quietly, without the impeachment or interuption of any person or persons whatsoever, for the honest recreation of such as shall desire to see the same nevertheless, under the regulations hereinafter mentioned, and such other as the s<sup>d</sup> Sir R. Steele from time to time

further grant to him, the said R Steele, his execs , etc , as aforesaid, that it shall be lawful to and for the s<sup>d</sup> R Steele, his execs , etc , to take and receive of such Our subjects as shall resort to see or hear any such plays, scenes, and entertainments whatsoever, such sum or sums of money as either have accustomably been given and taken in the like kind, or as shall be thought reasonable by him or them in regard of the great expenses of scenes, musick, and such new decorations as have not formerly been used. And further for Us, Our heirs and successors, We do hereby give and grant unto the s<sup>d</sup> R. Steele, his executors, etc , full power to make such allowances out of that which he shall so receive by the acting of plays and entertainments of the stage, as aforesaid, to the actors and other persons employed in acting, representing, or in any quality whatsoever about the s<sup>d</sup> theatre, as he or they shall think fit And that the said company shall be under the sole gov<sup>t</sup> and authority of the said R. Steele, his executors, etc , and all scandalous and mutinous persons shall from time to time by him and them be ejected and disabled from playing in the s<sup>d</sup> theatre And for the better attainment of Our Royal purposes in this behalf, We have thought fit hereby to declare that henceforth no representations be admitted on the stage by virtue, or under colour, of these Our Letters Patent, whereby the Christian religion in general or the Church of England may in any manner suffer reproach, strictly inhibiting every degree of abuse or misrepresentations of sacred characters, tending to expose religion itself, and bring it into contempt ; and that no such character be otherwise introduced, or placed in other light, than such as may enhance the just esteem of those who truly answer the end of their sacred function. We further enjoin the strictest regard to such representations as any way concern Civil Policy, or the Constitution of Our Government, that these may contribute to the support of Our sacred authority, and the preservation of order and good Government And it being Our Royal desire that, for the future, Our theatre may be instrumental to the promotion of virtue and instructive to humane life, We do hereby command and enjoin that no new play, or any old or revived play, be acted under the authority hereby granted containing any passages or expressions offensive to piety and good manners,

until the same be corrected and purged by the sd governor from all such offensive and scandalous passages and expressions. And these Our Letters Patents, etc , shall be good and effectual, anything in these presents contained, or any Law, Statute, Act, Proclamation, etc , or anything whatsoever to the contrary, in any wise notwithstanding.

Witness Our self at Westminster, Jan. 19th,  
1st year of Our reign By Writ of Privy  
Seal. Cocks.

This secured, the patentees now were "emboldened" to lay out large sums on mounting pieces, 600*l.* being expended on a revival, the dresses alone costing that sum. This introduction of Steele was, as we have just seen, a matter of favour or partiality, and due to the interest of a powerful nobleman, the Duke of Marlborough, whom Steele had gained by a happy repartee which had been repeated to the duke. Much too was owing to his own great services to the dynasty, for, as he wrote to his lady sometime in 1717, "you are witness that I have served the royal family with an unreservedness due only to heaven. But I am now (I thank my brother Whigs) not possessed of twenty shillings from the favour of the Court. The playhouse it had been barbarity to deny at the players' request, therefore I do not account it a favour. . . . You will find I have got so much constancy and fortitude as to live my own way wherever I am. To provide for and do you good is all my ambition." In these days the Duke of Bolton was Lord Chamberlain, and also favoured Steele.

A pleasant picture is given of one of the new manager's visits to his patron at Blenheim, where he found himself a guest with Bishop Hoadley and others, when private theatricals were got up and a play of Shakespeare's performed. When they were leaving the house, they found all the servants drawn up in two lines in the hall, waiting the expected "vails," as was

"Do you give money to all these fellows in laced coats and ruffles?" "I have not enough," said the bishop. On which Sir Richard addressed them, declaring that "as he had found them men of taste, he invited them all to Drury Lane Theatre to any play they might choose to bespeak"

The Lord Chamberlain presently went out of office, and then came a very serious change in the spirit of the Court. He was succeeded by the Duke of Newcastle, who desired to have all persons under his rule, and tried to introduce despotic regulations and more effectual control. On coming into office he appears to have been friendly to Steele, who styles him "his most honoured lord and patron." Almost his first step was to summon his theatrical dependents before him, and persuade them to surrender their patent and accept one of less extent. Steele thus relates what took place "When your Grace," he says, "came to be Chamberlain, from a generous design of making every office and authority the better for your wearing, your Grace was induced to send for me and the other sharers, and in an absolute manner offered us a licence and demanded a resignation of the patent, which I presumed as absolutely to refuse. This refusal I made in writing, and petitioned the King for his protection in the grant which he has given me. The matter rested thus for many months, and the next molestation we received was an order to close."

An ill-natured report was later spread abroad that Drury Lane Theatre was unsafe. It is amusing to find that the Chamberlain eagerly seized on the excuse, and sent one of the royal surveyors to examine it. The report, dated January 25th, is from Sir T. Hewitt, Surveyor of Works, to His Grace the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Chamberlain:

I have surveyed the house in Drury Lane, and took along with me Mr. Ripley, Commissioner of Board of Works, the master bricklayer, and carpenter. We examined all the parts

with the greatest exactness we could, and found the walls, roofing, stage, pit, boxes, galleries, machinery, scenes, etc., sound and almost as good as when first built, neither decayed nor in the least danger of falling, and when some small repairs are made, and an useless stack of chimneys (built by the late Mr. Rich) taken down, the building may continue for a long time, being from the materials and joints good, and no part giving way, and capable to bear much greater weight than is put upon them.

THOMAS HEWITT.

N B.—The stack of chimneys mentioned in this report, which were placed over the stone passage leading to the boxes, are actually taken down

A notice issued by the proprietors throws light on the method of advertising.

September, 1721.—The managers of the Theatre Royal in Drury Lane think it proper to give notice that advertisements of plays, by their authority, are published only in this paper (*The Daily Post*) and *The Daily Courant*, and in no other paper, and that the publishers of all other papers who insert advertisements of the said plays can do it only by some surreptitious intelligence or hearsay, which frequently leads them to commit gross mistakes, as mentioning one play for another, falsely representing the parts, etc., to the misinformation of the town, and to the great detriment of the said theatre

Though matters were allowed to take their course for a time, the Chamberlain deeply resented the opposition of his wishes. An occasion for interference with the comedians was found when an adaptation of Molière's "Tartuffe," by Cibber, under the name of "The Nonjuror," was presented with extraordinary success. It was obvious that this was in the interests of the Whigs and their Government, and was intended to bring ridicule on the Tories. Yet the Chamberlain affected to see a contrary design, and as it caused much heat and confusion among the factious, he picked out Cibber, who played the part with spirit, and sent an

any cause assigned, or preface declaring by what authority, a noble lord sends a message, directed to Sir Richard Steele, Mr. Wilks, and Mr. Booth, to dismiss Mr. Cibber, who for some time submitted to a disability of appearing on the stage during the pleasure of one that had nothing to do with it. When this lawless will and pleasure was changed, a very frank declaration was made, that all the mortification put upon Mr. Cibber was intended only as a remote beginning of evils which were to affect the patentee I presumed to write to your Grace against it, and expressed my sorrow that you would give me no better occasion of showing my duty to you but by bearing oppression from you. This produced a message from your secretary, ‘to forbid me ever to write, speak, or visit you more’” Steele’s answer was “almost in these words,” begging of the messenger to note his manner, voice, and gesture, asking him “if he had not used phrases that spoke of his mortification and sorrow, he hoped he would supply them. At the same time you may truly say that if any other man were Chamberlain, and should send me such a message, my reply should be as haughty as it is now humble.” Soon after he heard that Mr Booth had been sent for, that his own patent should be tested in a court of law, and was further “threatened with a sign manual” which would disable his defence. To this the Chamberlain added his own edict

Whereas His Majesty has thought fit by his letters of revocation, dated January 23rd, 1720, or divers weighty reasons therein contained, to revoke his royal licence. for the effectual prevention of any future misbehaviour, in obedience to His Majesty’s commands I do by virtue of my office hereby discharge you, the said managers and comedians, from further acting. January 25th, 1720.

*To the gentlemen managing the company of comedians at the theatre in Drury Lane, in Covent Garden, and to all the comedians and actors there.*

Thus, as Steele points out sarcastically, whereas His Majesty had expressed himself with reserve and care that nothing should hurt his poor subject but what the law allowed, the Chamberlain had supplied the defect

A mere personal quarrel would not altogether account for the animosity of the Chamberlain's Office to Steele. The new patent had practically annihilated the power of the Master of the Revels, since Killigrew's death filled by Mr. Charles Lee; it had removed the theatre and players from the simpler control of the licence, cut down his fees, and reduced his office to a small salary and official apartments. It was not unnatural that the office should strive to recover its influence and impair the newly-granted rights, and it only wanted good-will and boldness to do so. For, as we have seen, Rich's patents were rendered useless for years, by the simple closing of the theatre by the Chamberlain's order, and Steele's also was to be made useless by the same mode. No less than sixty families, he urged, were dependent on him and the house. "The thing itself," he went on, "is but a shop to work in, and receives nothing from the Crown. If I had been laceman, sadler, or shoemaker to the Crown by patent, I could not have been dispossessed but by due course of law."

"The patent," he insisted, "was the same as others, and no more infringes the Chamberlain's authority than theirs did. I will to their teeth defend it, and make them understand that there are men who are not to be teased, vexed, worried, calumniated, or browbeaten out of the laws of England." After this angry burst, he adds "Some have said, in contention, that actors as such are not within the rules of the rest of the world, as if they were among men like the *fæc naturæ* among animals. If this were so, they would not be under the Chamberlain at all."

proceedings. He quoted the opinions of counsel, that the patent was not to be shaken. Pemberton, Northey, and Parker had been, he said, consulted by those who succeeded Davenant—in February, 1705—and they had held that the patent was a “fee.” But the truth was, he did not touch the question, which was, the unquestioned power of the Crown to suspend the exercise of the patent (it will have been seen that the Chamberlain affected to be dealing with a licence only), and which was essential to the very power of granting it. It is enough to state this to show that the position could not be contraverted, and the King, possessed of such exceptional and unlimited power, could not be supposed to divest himself of it.

In this place I may give the opinions of the law officers referred to. It will be seen what a delicate matter it was as regards the King’s authority, but they bore out Steele’s contentions.

The opinion of Pemberton was asked

*Quære 1.* Whether the grant of a power to A. B. and his heirs and assigns, by the letters patent, to erect a theatre and act plays, be a good grant in fee and assignable, or shall determine with King Charles the Second’s death?

*Answer* I do not see that to act plays, etc., is unlawful in itself, either by common law or by any statute. It is true, to wander about from county to county, as stage-players, is forbid by 39 Eliz c. 4, but not the acting of plays, etc., which may be used, for aught I see, as an innocent amusement.

I think the King’s patent may be available to give the better countenance to their entertainments, and so may be transferred from ancestor to heir, or assigned for that purpose. (For the same reason he thinks it effectual after the death of the King.)

*Quære 2* Whether the King’s agreement that no company shall be permitted in London, Westminster, and the suburbs

shall hinder all others from acting within that circuit, unless authorised by letters patent?

*Answer* Taking this to be an employment permitted, or not prohibited by law (as I take this to be), I do not think the King's concession, in his letters patent, that no one shall be permitted to act stage-plays or interludes in London, etc., will be effectual to hinder others from acting there. However, I think such prohibition will last no longer than the King who grants it lives.

*Quære 3* Whether the Lord Chamberlain as such, or other except the King, can grant a licence to actors, in regard it is not (as supposed) a lawful calling, but only for the King's pleasure? The Lord Chamberlain hath lately sworn several actors to be the King's servants, to save them from being molested.

*Answer* If the acting of plays were unlawful in its nature, and *malum in se* (which I do not take it to be), I do not see how the Lord Chamberlain or any other officer, or the King himself, could give a licence to any to act plays, etc. But taking the employment not to be lawful in itself, I conceive the Lord Chamberlain or Master of the Revels, with the King's allowance, may authorise any persons to act, or forbid and hinder them from acting in any of the King's houses or palaces. And their grants to any to act in any other places may be used to countenance or give a popular representation to the comedies or plays that they act. But I know of no other effect that they can have. And I conceive they cannot prohibit any to act in any place out of the King's palaces so long as they behave themselves modestly and decently.

F. PEMBERTON.

Sir Edward Northey was consulted, thirteen years before, and delivered his opinion as follows.

*Quære.* Whether the grants by letters patents from Charles the Second to Sir W. Davenant and his heirs, etc., be not a good grant in fee or assignable? or whether they be determinable on the King's death, they having laid out to the value of 8000*l.* etc. by virtue of the letters patents?

*Answer.* I am of opinion the letters patents were a good licence to Sir William Davenant, his heirs, etc., for a theatre and plays, and if he, his heirs, etc., do not abuse such licence, they may continue the plays notwithstanding the death of Charles the Second.

4th February, 1703.

Opinion of Sir T. Parker, now Lord Chancellor, on the same *quære*

*Answer.* The letters patents are both express. That the King grants for him, his heirs, and successors, and I think the assigns of Sir W. Davenant and Mr Killigrew, and their heirs, may still continue their plays, etc., in the house built under the authority of those patents, as well as Davenant and Killigrew could have done were they alive now, or during the life of Charles the Second, who granted them.

November 10th, 1705.

This cruel act of oppression was almost his ruin. He gave way to the most bitter indignation. He published his wrongs, founding a periodical, "The Theatre," to ventilate his complaints. The Lord Chamberlain he pursued with vituperation, even apologising for the more obsequious and amiable tone in which he had first addressed "his honoured lord and patron" when making his complaint. "The sense of the Chamberlain's former patronage made me write him a letter in the theatre much below the justice of my cause" "Give me," he says, "but the name of your adviser, that is to say, your lawyer. When I know who has thus made your Grace thus injure the best servant and the best master that ever man had, I will teach him the difference between law and justice. . . *He is an agent of Hell.* Such a man for a larger fee would lend a dark lanthorn to a murderer. I shall so far imitate him, as to be within the law when I am endeavouring to starve him." The personage who thus excited his fury was Serjeant

Pengelly, who had merely discharged a professional duty. He was on safer ground when he complained of the vindictive animosity of the Chamberlain, who gave no reason for his hostility, but declared openly "he would ruin Steele," which, he protested, was like the character in the comedy who "valued himself on his activity in tripping up cripples." His loss he estimated at—

600 <i>l</i> a year for life—modestly estimated at	£6000
The three years after my life . . . .	1800
My share in the scene stock . . . .	1000
The profit of acting my own plays . . . .	1000
	<hr/>
	£9800

The suspension lasted only a few weeks, when the comedians made their submission, and agreed to accept a licence. Steele, however, was not forgiven, and his patent was ignored. The theatre was allowed to be reopened on the 28th of January, and on the 4th March we learn that "the King's company of Drury Lane, belonging to the playhouse in Drury Lane, were sworn at the Lord Chamberlain's Office in Whitehall, pursuant to an order occasioned by their acting in obedience to His Majesty's licence, lately granted, exclusive of a patent formerly obtained by Sir Richard Steele. That the tenor of the oath was that, as His Majesty's servants, they should act subservient to the Lord Chamberlain, Vice-Chamberlain, and Gentleman Usher in Waiting." Nothing more humiliating than the terms of this submission could be—for it seems that even the Gentleman Usher in Waiting might control them. Strange to say, Cibber, though dealing minutely with the period, makes no allusion to his own suspension or to the withdrawal of the licence, which must have been their destruction.

Steele himself, however, had to wait another year for redress. On May 2nd, 1721, *The Daily Post* mentioned a rumour "that Sir Richard Steele is restored to his place of comptroller of Drury Lane." On the 18th of May he was actually reinstated. This was owing to a significant circumstance—the influence of his patron Walpole, who, we find, had become Chancellor of the Exchequer only three or four weeks before.

On this reconciliation he brought out a comedy, and we have a pleasant glimpse of Sir Richard during this palmy time. When his "Conscious Lovers" was produced, in 1721, "I sat by him in Burton's box, at the first performance, all the performers charmed him but Griffin, in the character of Cimberton. The comedy was received with unusual applause, and his royal patron, to whom it was dedicated (George the First), sent the author a present of 500*l.* Whilst the play was in rehearsal the surly old critic, Dennis, published a scurrilous pamphlet to prejudice the public against it; and, amongst other scandalous things, called Sir Richard, in his preface, 'An Irish twopenny author,' alluding to the 'Tatlers' and 'Spectators.'

The extraordinary success of Collier in destroying the supremacy of vice on the stage was said—and indeed it was to be expected it would do—to have gone farther, and to have introduced stupidity on the stage. This was seen in the comedies of Steele. They are indeed of the "goody-goody" sort. Says Hazlitt. "Nothing can be better meant, or more inefficient. It is almost a misnomer to call them comedies; they are rather homilies in dialogue, in which a number of very pretty ladies and gentlemen discuss the fashionable topics of gaming, of duelling, of seduction, of scandal, etc., with a sickly sensibility that shows as little hearty aversion to vice as sincere attachment to virtue. The whole distinction between virtue

and vice (as it appears in evidence in the comic drama) is reduced to verbal professions, and a mechanical, infantine goodness. The sting is indeed taken out of what is bad, but what is good at the same time loses its manhood and nobility. Steele, by introducing the artificial mechanism of morals on the stage, and making his characters act, not from individual motives and existing circumstances, the truth of which everyone must feel, but from vague topics and general rules, has lost that fine 'vantage-ground which the stage lends to virtue, takes away from it its best grace.'

## CHAPTER VIII.

### RICH AND THE PANTOMIMES

THOUGH rivals, Rich and the managers of Drury Lane now found it convenient to enter into what was called "a cartel," or rather to declare what was already allowed to them by their patents. This was a mutual engagement not to employ each other's actors without consent. On this principle they were enabled to exercise an almost despotic control over the players. One of the covenants was in the true spirit of the modern trades' union. No deserter was to be taken into service at the other house, and no one was to engage at one house without leave of the other. By this plan an article of agreement was made April 12th, 1722, "between Sir Richard Steele, Robert Wilks, Colley Cibber, and Barton Booth, of the one part, and John Rich and Christopher Mozier Rich of the other. Whereas the former are the present masters or managers of the company that play at Drury Lane, in the parishes of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and St Paul, Covent Garden, and the latter are masters of the company that play at Lincoln's Inn Fields, it was agreed reciprocally between these parties that from September to June each shall not receive or engage the actors of the other, under a penalty

of 20*l.* for each lapse" An "inventory" was attached, with a schedule of the players:

No. I.—*Men*. Mr. Lacy Ryan, Mr. James Quin, Mr. R. Diggs, Mr. Hewlet, Mr. J. Hall, Mr. Hildred Bullock, Mr. W. Bullock, jun., Mr. J. Rogers, Mr. Orphire, Mr. Rakehaw, Mr. Timothy Buck, Mr. Pinkethman, jun., Mr. J. Leigh, Mr. S. Smith, Mr. J. Lequerie (singer), Mr. Lully (dancer), Mr. Palling (dancer), Mr. Newhouse (dancer), Mr. Duffield (dancer), Mr. W. Chetwood (prompter).

*Women* Mrs. Ann Seymond, Mrs. J. Bullock, Mrs. Letitia Cross, Mrs. Jane Egleton, Mrs. Spillar, Mrs. Roger, Mrs. Anne Stone, Mrs. Sulick, Mrs. Marylook, Mrs. Parloe, Mrs. Hutten, Mrs. Frances, Mrs. Goodman, Mrs. Henriale Bullock (dancer).

No II.—*Men* Mr. J. Mills, Mr. B. Johnson, Mr. W. Pinkethman, Mr. H. Norris, Mr. D. Miller, Mr. Griffin, Mr. T. Bickerstaff, Mr. J. Thurmond, sen., Mr. J. Shond, Mr. C. Shepherd, Mr. C. Williams, Mr. W. Wilks, jun., Mr. J. Thurmond, jun., M. Dunoyer (dancer), Mr. J. Bowman, Mr. R. Cross, Mr. M. Birkhead, Mr. J. Bates, Mr. Wetherel, Mr. R. Wetherel, jun., Mr. Harper, Mr. Steed, Mr. J. Coeley, Mr. W. Mills, jun., Mr. P. Watson, Mr. J. Wray, Mr. T. Wilson, Mr. Roberts, Mr. Theo Cibber, Mr. Symonds, Mr. Boval (dancer)

*Women* Mrs. Anne Oldfield, Mrs. Mary Porter, Mrs. S. Thurmond, Mrs. M. Bicknell, Mrs. E. Horton, Mrs. E. Younger, Mrs. C. Baker, Mrs. Hen Moor, Mrs. Willis, sen., Mrs. Willis, jun., Mrs. Bullock (dancer), Mrs. Tenoe, Mrs. Bowman, Mrs. Heron, Mrs. Campbell, Mrs. Markham, Mrs. Tent.\*

Accordingly, in November, 1722, we find Mr. John Rich despatching a notification to the managers of the house, "Wilks, Cibber, and Booth, informing them that he has entertained in his service as an actor, Mr. John Hippesley."

The following indulgence was given to Chetwood by Mr. Rich

This is to certife that Mr Wm. Chetwood, late prompter at the Theatre Royal, Lincoln's Inn Fields, is hereby discharged from any further service or attendance in or at the same theatre, and that the said Wm Chetwood may be taken into the service of the Masters of any other theatre, without let or molestation from me whose name is underwritten —Jno Rich,  
Sept. 15, 1722

This Chetwood is remarkable as having written a pleasant little volume of sketches of actors of his day at Dublin, and was also prompter at one of the theatres at Smock Alley. On the other hand, we find Cibber, Booth, and Wilks notifying Rich that "they have entertained in their service Mrs Mary Davison," dated January, 1718. But this combination was carried out even in the matter of plays—a despotic arrangement, which continued almost to our own times, in spirit at least, and put the players almost at the mercy of their masters.

Agreement in the handwriting of Colley Cibber, dated Jan 17th, 1718, viz.

It is agreed that no play shall be received into the house, or the parts of any play be ordered to be written out, but by an order under the hands of three of the managers. Witness our hands, C. Cibber, Rob Wilks, B. Booth.

Here are some further entries of interest.

— Directions from the managers, 2 pp. 4to, as follows  
 "Add five shillings per week to young Mr. Cibber's salary. We think it reasonable to allow (the managers) 1l. 13s 4d per diem to each of us whose names are underwritten in consideration of our attendance, acting, etc.—Advance Mr. Theo Cibber to 40s. per week and young Peploe to 12s"

We find also in Wilks's hand

Mr. Castleman,—You are to enter Mr Robinson at fforty shillings per week from this day, July 11, 1720. Signed by Wilks, also by Colley Cibber and Barton Booth.

Also a notice served upon John Rich, Esq, October, 1722,  
signed by Booth, C. Cibber, R. Wilks:

Witnessed mem. that we delivered Mr John Rich ye  
above notification of R. Castelman, J. Robinson

The following is in Cibber's autograph

It is hereby ordered and agreed, that Sir Richard Steele,  
Mr Wilks, Mr Booth, and Mr Cibber shall each of them have  
twelve sealed tickets every week, to give to their friends to  
see plays gratis, and that no written note from them or any  
other person whatsoever shall admit persons to see plays.  
Witness our hands. Signed C. Cibber, also by Barton Booth  
and Robt Wilks.

Another memorandum is in the same autograph, and  
signed, dated September 14th, 1727

Mr Castleman,—Charge thirteen shils. and fourpence,  
every acting day, to reward such actors at the end of the  
season, as may appear to have deserved any reward for  
extraordinary services, and bring the remainder to acct  
Signed also by Barton Booth and Robert Wilks

A few memoranda connected with this administration will  
bring the stage life yet more vividly before us:

Bill of charges. Dated December 10th, 1715.

Cotten for the lampes	.	.	.	.	£0	0	6
Ffor waxe light	.	.	.	.	0	1	6
Ffor 3 burch broomes	.	.	.	.	0	0	6
For char cole	.	.	.	.	0	0	7
For small cole	.	.	.	.	0	0	6
For a ffladg broom	.	.	.	.	0	0	5
For sand, brick-dust, etc.	.	.	.	.	0	1	0
					£0	5	0

Signed for payment in the autograph of Colly Cibber, Barton  
Booth, and Rt Wilks.

A notice, dated October 19th, 1722, is as follows

To Messrs Booth, Cibber, and Wilks—Gentlemen,—This is to give you notice, pursuant under our agreement under hand and seal, etc, that I have entertained in my service, as an actor, John Ward, as actress, Mrs Henrietta Maria Morgan—I am, your most humble servant, Jno Rich. Witness—Thomas Wood, J Brook.

Then we have a notification by the managers, signed June 2nd, 1716

Mr Castelman,—You are to let Mr Devan, Mr Latour, the Hoboy and Mr Pots know that after Saturday, the 9th instant, the company have no further occasion for their performance in the music-room And let Mr Paisable know that he may have five shillings *per diem*, and one guinea every time he performs anything upon the stage Witnessed in the autograph of Colley Cibber and Barton Booth —On the reverse page “ You are to acquaint all the men actors that after Saturday, the 9th instant, no gloves will be allowed to any man for the use of the stage, unless such as require trimming upon them ” Also signed in the autograph of Cibber, Booth, and Wilks.

To contend with Rich's new venture the managers now bethought them of taking up a new species of entertainment, compounded of show and dancing—a vulgar medley—and which was afterwards by develop into pantomime. The hint had been given by Rich, “ who had produced some little harlequinade in the taste of the Italian night scenes,” but at the beginning of the year 1724, a celebrated spectacle, “ Dr. Faustus,” was brought out, which so took the town, and with its successors brought so much money, that the managers felt themselves compelled to adopt that form of entertainment. It was in this year, 1717, that Rich devised this new species of entertainment, and it is curious that for a period of nearly

forty years he was to hold possession of the town, and cause successive generations of managers—Cibber, Fleetwood, and Garrick—the most serious inconvenience, owing to this superior attraction. “*Harlequin Sorcerer*” was the first of these successes.

The other house, for all their classical professions, had to follow suit, for which Cibber makes rather lame excuse. “I have upon several occasions already observed that when one company is too hard for another, the lower in reputation has always been forced to exhibit some new-fangled foppery to draw the multitude after them. . . . Dancing therefore was now the only weight in the opposite scale, and as the new theatre sometimes found their account in it, it could not be safe for us wholly to neglect it. To give even dancing therefore some improvement, and to make it something more than motion without meaning, the fable of ‘Mars and Venus’ was formed into a connected presentation of dances in character, wherein the passions were so happily expressed, and the whole story so intelligibly told, by a mute narration of gesture only, that even thinking spectators allowed it both a pleasing and a rational entertainment, though, at the same time, from our distrust of its reception, we durst not venture to decorate it with any extraordinary expense of scenes or habits, but upon the success of this attempt it was rightly concluded that if a visible expense in both were added to something of the same nature, it could not fail of drawing the town proportionably after it. From this original hint then (but every way unequal to it) sprung forth that succession of monstrous medleys that have so long infested the stage, and which arose upon one another alternately at both houses outvying in expense, like contending bribes on both sides at an election, to secure a majority of the multitude” Thus we find “*Dr Faustus*” as a great attraction, in which, we are

told, "tricks were executed in a very surprising manner, and the last grand scene is superior in magnificence to anything that has ever yet appeared on the British stage. 'No money under the full price will be taken during the time of the play.' At Lincoln's Inn Fields there was a rival pantomime, 'Jupiter and Europa,' in which were Pierrot, Punch, and Columbine. The clown by Spiller. Also, a day later, 'Dr. Faustus' Harlequin by Mr Lun. 'To prevent any obstruction in the movement of the scenes, no person can be admitted behind scene'"

What, no doubt, tempted him to this curious experiment may have been the singular success, after the January of 1717, of one Swartz, a German, who had brought over two dogs whom he had taught to dance the loure and minuet. They were immediately engaged by Rich at 10*l.* a night, and brought twenty full houses, while the Othello of Booth, the Wildair of Wilks, and the Foppington of Cibber were neglected and did not even bring charges. After this, whether from difficulties, or good-will, or policy, in the month of September, he assigned his patent over to Keen and Bullock, two of the company.\*

But the managers of Drury Lane hardly counted on the talents, and versatile talents, of the new manager who had succeeded their old opponent, and whose head was already filled with bold, daring schemes of new entertainments and new theatres.

The character of this well-known person, Rich, is described by Davies, who has really good graphic powers in this direction

John Rich, the son of Christopher Rich, formerly patentee of Drury Lane Theatre, seems to have imbibed, from his very

\* Cibber, when he was engaged as one of Rich's own company, confesses without shame that he used to go into the pit and stir up disturbance by protesting against the rope-dancers and other shows given by his employer.

early years, *a dislike of the people with whom he was obliged to live and converse* We are told that his father wished rather to acquire wealth by French dancers, Italian singers, and every other exotic exhibition than by the united skill of the most accomplished comedians. The son inherited the same odd taste ; for being left by his father in the joint possession of the patent with his brother Christopher, and after having ineffectually tried his talent for acting in the part of the Earl of Essex and some other important character, he applied himself to the study of pantomimical representation at Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre He struggled with a great many difficulties ; he was very young and unexperienced, and the governing players, Bullock, Keen, and others, considered him as one very unfit to give laws to them and manage the business of a theatre.

To retrieve the credit of his theatre, Rich created a species of dramatic composition unknown to this, and, I believe, to any other country, which he called a pantomime. It consisted of two parts one serious, and the other comic, by the help of gay scenes, fine habits, grand dances, appropriate music, and other decorations, he exhibited a story from "Ovid's Metamorphoses," or some other fabulous history Between the pauses or acts of this serious representation he interwove a comic fable, consisting chiefly of the courtship of Harlequin and Columbine, with a variety of surprising adventures and tricks which were produced by the magic wand of Harlequin : such as the sudden transformation of palaces and temples to huts and cottages, of men and women into wheelbarrows and joint-stools ; of trees turned to houses ; colonnades to beds of tulips ; and mechanics' shops into serpents and ostriches It would be idle to dwell long upon a subject which almost everybody is as familiar with as the writer.

It is a very singular circumstance that of all the pantomimes which Rich brought on the stage, there was scarce one which failed to please the public, who testified their approbation of them forty or fifty nights successively.

It was during the "run" of these pantomimes that complaints were made by ladies waiting that " footmen with flamboys came within the first bars on each side of the

house" We find that at Chetwood's benefit, in 1726, at the Haymarket Theatre, "by His Majesty's command no persons whatever to be admitted behind the scenes"

The year 1702 becomes of interest, as it introduces perhaps the earliest of the pantomimes given at Drury Lane under the title of "The Tavern Bilkers" This was written by one Weaver, a man of much wit and ingenuity, and a friend of Steele and Addison, who speak of his book on the "Art of Dancing" in their "Spectator," with great "elegy" He lived to teach C Burney dancing, when near ninety years of age Further, it was recorded as a novel incident, that in "The Empress of the Moon," Pinkethman acted Harlequin "*without a mask*" Harlequins had, however, long before been introduced into plays, and it will be recollectcd that Cibber, speaking of Pinkethman, alludes to his playing Harlequin in a farce of Mis Behn's, "The Empress of the Moon," produced in 1687 "Several gentlemen, who inadvertently judged by the rules of nature, fancied that a great deal of the drollery and spirit of his grimace was lost by his wearing that useless, unmeaning mask of a black cat, and therefore insisted that the next time of his acting that part he should play without it. Their desire was accordingly complied with—but, alas! in vain, he was no more Harlequin, his humour was quite disconcerted, his conscience could not, with the same effrontery, declare against nature without the cover of that unchanging face"

It will be interesting to dwell rather in detail upon this favourite form of entertainment, the taste for which still survives, though the show itself is completely transformed in character.

A contemporary account of "Dr. Faustus, that late celebrated dance," is curious. It was not designed as an imitation of the ancient pantomimes "Every action was executed to different agreeable music so properly adapted that it properly

expresses what is going forward, in the machinery there is something so highly surprising that words cannot give a full idea of it. The effects described seem to be marvellous, considering the state of theatrical mechanism. A devil riding on a fiery dragon rides swiftly across the stage. Two countrymen and women enter to be told their fortunes, when Dr Faustus waves his wand and four pictures turn out of the scenes opposite, representing a judge, a soldier, a dressed lady, and a lady in a riding habit, the scene changing to the outside of a handsome house, when the louting men running in place their backs against the door. The front of the house turns, and at the same instant the machine turns, a supper, ready dressed, rises up. The countrymen's wives remain with the Doctor, who goes out. He beckons the table, and it follows him. Punch, Scaramouch, and Piero are next met by the Doctor, who invites them in to a banquet. The table ascends into the air. He waves his wand, and asses' ears appear at the sides of their heads. A usurer, lending money to Dr Faustus, demands a limb as security, and cuts off the Doctor's leg. Several legs appear on the scene, and the Doctor strikes a woman's leg with his wand, which immediately flies from the rest and fixes to the Doctor's stump, who dances with it ridiculously. The next scene opens, disclosing the Doctor's study. He enters affrighted, and the clock strikes one, the figures of Time and Death appear. Several devils enter, tear him in pieces, some sink, some fly out, each bearing a limb of him. The last, which is the grand scene, is the most magnificent that ever appeared on the English stage—all the gods and goddesses discovered, with the apotheosis of Diana, ascending into the air."

In another of Rich's pantomimes, perhaps "The Sorcerer," a dance of infernals was to be exhibited. They were represented in dresses of black and red, with fiery eyes and snaky locks, and garnished with every appendage of horror. Among them

there suddenly appeared an additional goblin—they were twelve in number, but this made the thirteenth—and who seemed from his more terrific dress to be the chief fiend. Gradually his companions grew alarmed—they knew he did not belong to them—a general panic succeeded, and the whole group fled different ways, some to their dressing-rooms, others through the streets to their own homes. The confusion of the audience is scarcely to be believed, its reality was so thoroughly believed that no official explanation that could be made would entirely do away with the idea Jackson, of the Scotch theatres, had this explanation from Rich himself in the presence of Bencraft, the contriver if not the actor of it—it was an innocent frolic of his to confuse the dancers.

One of the Drury Lane corps was Mr John Thurmond, who, says Chetwood, “was an actor of repute in this kingdom about thirty years past, and stood in many capital parts, being then a sharer in old Smock Alley Theatre with Mr. Thomas Elrington, etc. To let you see how formerly even tragedy heroes were now and then put to their shifts, I'll tell you a short story that befel Mr Thurmond. It was the custom at that time for persons of the first rank and distinction to give their birthday suits to the most favoured actors. I think Mr. Thurmond was honoured by General Ingoldsby with his, but his finances being at the last tide of ebb, the rich suit was put in buckle (a cant word for forty in the hundred interest) One night, notice was given that the General would be present with the Government at the play, and all the performers on the stage were preparing to dress out in the suits presented. The spouse of Johnny (as he was commonly called) tried all her arts to persuade Mr. Holdfast, the pawnbroker (as it fell out, his real name), to let go the cloathes for that evening, to be returned when play was

the whole family in confusion, and all at their wits'-end. Fatal appearance! At last Winny, the wife (that is, Winnifrede), put on a composed countenance (but alas! with a troubled heart), stepped to a neighbouring tavern, and bespoke a very hot negus to comfort Johnny in the great part he was to perform that night, begging to have the silver tankard with the lid, because, as she said, *a covering and the vehicle silver would retain heat longer than any other metal*. The request was complied with, the negus carried to the playhouse piping hot; popped into a vile earthen mug, the tankard l'argent travelled incog under her apron (like the Persian ladies veiled; popped into the pawnbroker's hands, in exchange for the suit, put on, and played its part, with the rest of the wardrobe. When its duty was over, carried back to remain in its old depositoiry; the tankard returned the right road, and when the tide flowed with its lunar influence the stranded suit was wafted into safe harbour again, after paying a little for dry docking, which was all the damage received. Mr Thurmond died in London, when he was one of the company in Drury Lane Theatre, a merry good-natured companion to the last." These trifling stories are quoted to show the position of the actor at the time.

Theo Cibber, who knew him, says that "when they took up pantomimes they were assisted by Mr John Thurmond, dancing-master, an honest, good-natured man, and a pleasant companion. He, finding his performances as a dancer were not of the utmost consequence, struck out this new kind of entertainment, on the success of which he built some hopes of becoming more useful to the managers, and gaining a better income for himself."

Hogarth, who had not yet become the familiar friend of Rich, satirised this rage for pantomime in an extraordinary print, full of coarse ridicule and inscriptions, the whole of which cannot be given.

A just view of the British stage, or three heads better than one, scene Newgate, by M. D. V—to \* This print represents the rehearsing a new farce, that will include the two famous entertainments, "Dr. Faustus" and "Harlequin Shepherd" To which will be added "Scaramouch Jack Hall" the chimney-sweeper's escape from Newgate through the privy, with the comical humours of "Ben Jonson's Ghost," concluding with the "Hay Dance," performed in the air by the figures A. B. C. (Wilks, Booth, and Cibber) assisted by ropes from the Muses. The ropes are no other than halters, suspended over the heads of the three managers, and the labels issuing from their mouths have the following words The airy Wilks, who dangles the effigy of Punch, exclaims "Poor R—ch! faith I pity him" The laureat Cibber, with Harlequin, invokes the Muses on the ceiling "Assist, ye sacred Nine," while Booth quotes Jack Hall, saying "Ha! this will do, G—d d—m me!" On a table before them is a pamphlet, exhibiting a print of Jack Shepherd in confinement, there is also suspended a parcel of waste paper, consisting of leaves torn from "The Way of the World," "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "Julius Cæsar" "Ben Jonson's Ghost," in the meanwhile, is rising through the stage The faces of Tragedy and Comedy are covered by the bills for "Harlequin Dr Faustus" and "Harlequin Shepherd," etc etc There is also a dragon preparing to fly, a dog thrusting his head out of his kennel; a flask put in motion by machinery, etc *Virtutu Ingenuo* is the motto over the curtain

Theo Cibber and his father both vindicate this lack of taste in the managers of a theatre of such high pretensions The latter's plea is of a cynical kind, being Henry the Fourth's excuse for changing his religion They were obliged to follow the taste of the town, though indeed he urged they "only used them as crutches for our weakest plays." His son's excuses were more entertaining, and supply us with a picture of manners to boot.

\* Divoto was painter to Drury Lane or Lincoln's Inn Fields, and also to Goodman's Fields Theatre

In this early pantomime we find the manager's son Theo contributing his talent "I remember," says the author of "*The Mock Apology*," "that for want of a better performer, I undertook to be the harlequin, and, as few knew who it really was, I was received with more applause than I could have imagined. Nor was this my only success in pantomime. everyone who remembers '*Dr Faustus*' at Drury Lane must remember the statue. All the pantomimical motions of this magic statue had a good effect in that scene they surprised, they elevated, they pleased, and were applauded."

Rich, the first and most famous of English harlequins, always acted as "*Mr Lun*," the name of a celebrated French harlequin.

These pantomimes were announced to be set off with "scenes, machines, flyings, and other decorations." The flyings, however, sometimes broke down, and there were accidents in consequence. Chetwood recounts some of these disastrous incidents. Ralph Ellington, a brother of the well-known actor, having adopted this line,

He was admired some years ago as a good executing harlequin. In one of his feats of activity he was much hurt, and was in some danger of breaking his neck to please the spectators, yet this unlucky spring met with universal applause. I remember a tumble in the Haymarket Theatre in London, by such an accident, beat the breath out of his body, which raised such vociferous applause that lasted longer than the venturesome man's life, for he never breathed more. Indeed, his wife had this comfort when the truth was known, pity succeeded to the roar of applause. Another accident like this fell out in "*Dr Faustus*," a pantomime entertainment in Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatre, where a machine in the working broke, threw the mock Pierot down headlong with such force that the poor man broke a plank on the stage with his fall, and expired; another was so sorely maimed that he did not survive many days; and a third, one of the softer sex, broke

her thigh. But to prevent such accidents for the future, those persons are represented by inanimate figures, so that if they break a neck, a leg, or an arm, there needs no surgeon. Another accident of the same kind happened in Smock Alley, which gave me much concern, as having a hand in the contrivance. The late Mr Morgan being to fly on the back of a witch, in "The Lancashire Witches," through the ignorance of the workers in the machinery the fly broke, and they both fell together, but, through Providence, they neither of them were much hurt, and such care was taken afterwards, that no accident of that kind could happen.

It is needless to say that the mongrel entertainment known to us as pantomime has nothing in common with this, and is a mere capricious show.

Mr Cibber, however, explains the success of the rival house after his own fashion. "After this new theatre had enjoyed that short run of favour which is apt to follow novelty their audiences began to flag, but whatever good opinion we had of our own merit, we had not so good a one of the multitude as to depend too much upon the delicacy of their tastes. We knew too that this company, being so much nearer to the City than we were, would intercept many an honest customer that might not know a good market from a bad one; and that the thinnest of their audiences must be always taking something from the measure of our profits."

The managers roused themselves for further exertions, and determined to procure, if possible, an entertainment on the same scale of splendour, so as to contend on equal terms.

As the managers boasted themselves strictly "legitimate," it was naturally remarked that they were inconsistent in giving those vulgar shows and mummeries, or "faragolios." But the only answer was the profit of the thing, as the charges were raised from "common prices" (4*s*, 2*s* 6*d*, 1*s* 6*d*, and 1*s*) to 5*s*. etc. Cibber the younger gives a pleasant scene—

where he was present—when this objection was made. Mr. Booth's defence was characteristic.

I remember being with Mr Booth at a coffee-house, when a number of gentlemen politely addressed him, and gave him their thanks for the extraordinary pleasure they had received the night before from his excellent acting in the part of Varanes. They were unanimous in their almost raptured praises, and as jointly (but genteelly) blamed him for having tacked to so fine a play that senseless stuff, as they were pleased to call it, of "Perseus and Andromeda," etc., adding they were much beneath the dignity of the theatre. Mr. Booth frankly answered that he thought a thin audience was a much greater indignity to the stage than any they mentioned, and a full one most likely to keep up the spirit of the actor, and consequently heighten the representation. He begged them to consider there were many more spectators than men of taste and judgment, and if, by the artifice of a pantomime, they could entice a greater number to partake of the *utile dulci* of a good play than could be drawn without it, he could not see any great harm in it, that as they were performed after the play they were no interruption to it, and gave the people of fashion a better opportunity (if they left the house before the farce began) of getting to their coaches with more ease than if the whole audience poured out together. For his part, he confessed he considered profit as well as fame, and as to their plays, even they reaped some advantage from the pantomimes, by adding to the accounts, which enabled the managers to be more expensive in their habits, and other decorations of the theatre in general, and to give better encouragement to their performers. He desired them to recollect what sums were expended on operas, how much it was the fashion to subscribe to them, how high were their prices, and what a train of nobility and gentry were drawn to them, to the no small prejudice of the play-house, as appeared by the melancholy testimony of their receipts, till by those auxiliary pantomimes they not only found their pit and galleries were fuller, but their boxes made a nobler appearance, and as Mr. Hill had justly observed, he could not think it was the business of the directors to be wise to empty boxes.

This coffee-house scene, thus pleasantly sketched, is followed by some curious remarks, which show us what was the custom in these days as to orders or “frank tickets,” and other arrangements for admission. The advance prices, and return of the money, or a portion of it, seems to have been virtually a system of taking half-price for the beginning of the entertainment rather than for the end.

There was a person who mingled with this set of gentlemen, more remarkable for his economy than any other extraordinary quality, who perhaps did not pay for one play in ten he saw, as he could reconcile himself with an easy address to solicit an order (or frank ticket) from the managers; nay, he was so particularly cautious in his conduct as to his disbursements, that he often, as he loved music (or pretended a taste for it), would take a place in the pit, to hear the first and second music (which latter used to be some select piece), but prudently retired, taking his money again at the door before the third music, and by that means often kept out a spectator who would have been glad to have enjoyed the whole entertainment, though he paid for it. This person hinted that those who were desirous of seeing a play were obliged to pay an advanced price, on account of these added prices, whether they chose to have them or not. To this objection I started a remedy, which the managers approved; and, by my advice, a N.B. was inserted in the bills, to this effect “The advance-money to be returned to those who choose to go out before the overture to the entertainment.” This silenced the clamour against the advanced prices, and the managers did not find the receipts much lessened by it, for I question if there was a demand for the return of twenty pounds in ten years.\*

Mr. Cibber, in his “Apology,” observes “a modest mistake” which Mr. Booth committed in his acting the part of

\* At the bottom of a bill in 1744, we read “N B —Those gentlemen or ladies who don’t choose to stay the entertainment are desired to take a ticket at the door, on the delivery of which (if before the entertainment begins), the advance-money will be returned.”

Morat. "There are," he says, "in this fierce character, so many sentiments of avowed barbarity, insolence, and vainglory, that they blaze even to a ludicrous lustre, and doubtless the poet intended those to make his spectators laugh while they admired them, but Booth thought it depreciated the dignity of a tragedy to raise a smile in any part of it, and therefore covered these kind of sentiments with a scrupulous coldness and unmoved delivery, as if he had feared the audience might take too familiar a notice of them."

Meanwhile the sleeping partner—the jovial Sir Richard—did no more than draw his share of the now increasing profits, without contributing any exertion towards the direction of the theatre. His partners generally grew discontented, for they were doing his work, and yet receiving no more than he was

Dr Johnson's version of Addison's treatment of his friend has often been recounted. Johnson attributes the harsh proceeding of putting in the execution to Addison's eagerness to recover his money. But Victor's story is that Steele had built "an elegant small house" at Hampton, on which he borrowed 1000*l* from Addison. Addison put in the execution, sold the house and furniture, and sent him the balance with a friendly letter, saying that his object was "to wake him from that lethargy which would be his ruin." Victor had this story from Wilks the actor, and adds "During the last year which Steele passed in London I seldom missed seeing him in some part of every day, and being always delighted with his old stories I ventured, when I found him in the vein, to mention the occurrence. He told me it was literally true—that he received it as it was meant by his friend, *to do him service.*" See Victor's letter.

This they showed him (says Cibber) upon Sir Richard's totally absenting himself from all care and management of the stage (which by our articles of partnership he was equally and

jointly obliged with us, to attend). We were reduced to let him know that we could not go on at that rate, but that if he expected to make the business a *sinecure*, we had as much reason to expect a consideration for our extraordinary care of it, and that during his absence we therefore intended to charge ourselves at a salary of 17 13*s* 4*d* every acting day (unless he could show us cause to the contrary) for our management To which, in his composed manner, he only answered "That to be sure we knew what was fitter to be done than he did, that he had always taken a delight in making us easy, and had no reason to doubt of our doing him justice" The fact was truly this, that he never once directly nor indirectly complained or objected to our being paid the above-mentioned daily sum in near three years together, and yet still continued to absent himself from us and our affairs

In the curious speech which Cibber was allowed to make when the case came into Chancery, he explained to the court how

Sir Richard then was often in want of money, and while we were in friendship with him we often assisted his occasions. But those compliances had so unfortunate an effect that they only heightened his importunity to borrow more, and the more we lent the less he minded us, or showed any concern for our welfare Upon this, sir, we stopped our hands at once, and peremptorily refused to advance another shilling till, by the balance of our accounts, it became due to him. And this treatment (though we hope not in the least unjustifiable) we have reason to believe so ruffled his temper that he at once was as short with us as we had been with him, for from that day he never more came near us. Nay, sir, he not only continued to neglect what he should have done, but actually did what he ought not to have done He made an assignment of his share, without our consent, in manifest breach of our agreement. For, sir, we did not lay that restriction upon ourselves for no reason. We knew beforehand what trouble and inconvenience it would be to unravel and expose our accounts to strangers.

The managers, however, found it necessary for their own protection to make a formal contract with Sir R Steele, to the effect that "whereas the Lord Chamberlain did lately direct that he should not be paid his fourth share, it is now ordered that he should receive it, but that if, on any future occasion, the Chamberlain should divert the share, he agrees now not to claim it"\*

In 1721, we have found the aggrieved Steele writing that he was "resolved to pursue very warmly my being restored to the government of the Theatre Royal, which is my right, under the title of Governor of the Royal Company of Comedians, and from which I have been violently dispossessed by the Duke of Newcastle, Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's household, upon a frivolous pretence of jurisdiction in his office, which he has been persuaded to assert This I take to have been instigated by the late secretaries But if it could have entered into my thoughts that it was possible men could fail of placing the same value (as a security against a contingent demand) which I gave for it, your answer had not been at all what it was You have been the chief engine in ensnaring me into a concession which I should have been ashamed to own, before you had the resolution to deny so equitable a demand as I made to you But as it now is, besides the folly of giving to men richer than myself, I have done it to those who have no regard for me, but as a tool and a screen against others who want to cheat you all, and forbear only because of my relation to you, which shall not be very long, for I have it in my power to get rid of my enemies much more easily than I can have common justice of my friends. This is evident in the monstrous hardness of denying the governor of the house (as you shall find I am) the superfluity

\* These "articles of agreement," duly engrossed, are to be seen, framed and hung in the British Museum for the benefit of the curious

of his income, which is liable to no demand or pretence but that of, sir, your most humble servant,—RICHARD STEELE”

To Booth he wrote (on the same day and even on the same sheet of paper) that, as he was not so intimate with him as with the other two, he did not expect the same tenderness he had hoped for from them. He asked bitterly if he had taken counsel “whether a partner who had paid the mortgagee off his part, and given the partners, in pure benevolence, a thousand pounds, as a title to their taking his share of the estate, should not have security against the mortgage-deeds unjustly detained from him.”\*

\* On the back of this part are some loose calculations on “the neat profits” of the theatre, but crossed out. They are for the year 1721. The partners were reckoning up his share

	3 4ths	The 4th part	The 4th of the 5th
	£ s d	£ s d	£ s d
Sept 23	94 10 0	31 10 0	4 4 0
Oct 7	84 0 0	28 0 0	4 4 0
21	108 15 0	36 5 0	5 9 9
28	81 0 0	27 0 0	4 1 6
Nov 4	114 0 0	38 0 0	5 14 0
11	99 9 0	33 0 0	4 19 0
18	117 0 0	39 0 0	5 17 0
25	150 0 0	50 0 0	7 10 0
Dec 2	162 0 0	54 0 0	8 2 0

#### NEAT PROFITS FOR 1721

Month and day	Total profit £ s d	4th part	The 4th of the 5th. £ s d
		£ s d	
Sept 23	126 0 0	31 10 0	6 6 0
Oct 7	112 0 0	28 0 0	5 12 0
21	145 0 0	36 5 0	7 5 0
28	108 0 0	27 0 0	5 8 0
Nov 4	152 0 0	38 0 0	7 12 0
11	132 0 0	33 0 0	6 12 0
18	156 0 0	39 0 0	7 16 0
25	200 0 0	50 0 0	10 0 0
Dec 2	216 0 0	54 0 0	10 16 0
	£1347 0 0	£386 15 0	£67 7 0

PLAYHOUSE ACCOUNT, 1723-24—Nov 2, 21*l*, Nov 7, 29*l*, Nov 16, 21*l*, Nov 23, 18*l*, Nov 30, 58*l*, Dec 7, 58*l*, Dec 14, 45*l*, Dec 21, 67*l*, Dec 28, 13*l*, Jan 4, 18*l*, Jan 11,—, Jan 18,—, Jan 25,—, Feb 1, 20*l*, Feb 8, 30*l*, Feb 15, 8*l*, Feb 22, 12*l*, Feb 29, 27*l*, March 7, 24*l*, March 14, 42*l*, March 21, 15*l* Total, 516*l*

But with all this good promise and good material, fresh discord was now to break out between the working managers and Sir Richard Steele, whose extravagance, and at the same time indifference to the business of the house, together led to quarrels. For the latter they found a sort of compensation in charging him for their services, as we find from the following, dated September 12th, 1724—“We think it reasonable to allow one pound thirteen shillings and fourpence per diem to each of us whose names are underwritten, in consideration of our constant attendance, management, and acting.” Signed by Colley Cibber, B. Booth, and Robert Wilks. Steele became more hostile.

In 1724 we find the managers writing in the most desponding strain as to their venture, wishing that Steele would come to town, now desiring him to make “all speed to us” “Our audiences decrease daily, and these low entertainments, which you and we so heartily despise, draw the numbers, whilst we act only to the few who are blest with common sense. Though the opera is worn, yet it draws better than before, and some persons of distinction have engaged French comedians to come over to the Haymarket. Thus, while there are three play-houses exhibiting nonsense of different kinds against us, it is impossible we should subsist much longer. Both the Courts have forsaken us. All we can do is to make the best of a losing game, and part from the whole on the best terms we can. No person living but ourselves is sensible of the low state we are reduced to, therefore we need not observe to you how very needful it is to keep the secret. There are several persons of fortune that we have reason to believe would be glad to purchase our interests, and put it on the footing of the opera by fixing the direction into an academy . . . P.S.—Our profits were ever more than double to what they have been this year, and we are very far from any hopes of their growing

better Our proposal of parting with our interests will still leave room for any of us to adventure upon this new scheme in what proportion we please ”

The partners at last went to law The cause came to a hearing before the Master of the Rolls in 1726, and the oddity of the case was that one of the managers, Cibber, was allowed to address the court—a matter, however, that came easy to him, as he had, he said, to speak to some fifty thousand persons every winter. This he did with such success that the matter was decided in his favour

After the suit was heard, the issue of it was this “That Sir Richard not having made any objection to what we had charged for management for three years together, and as our proceedings had been all transacted in open day, without any clandestine intention of fraud, we were allowed the sums in dispute above mentioned, and Sir Richard not being advised to appeal to the Lord Chancellor, both parties paid their own costs, and thought it their mutual interest to let this be the last of their lawsuits ”

END OF VOL I